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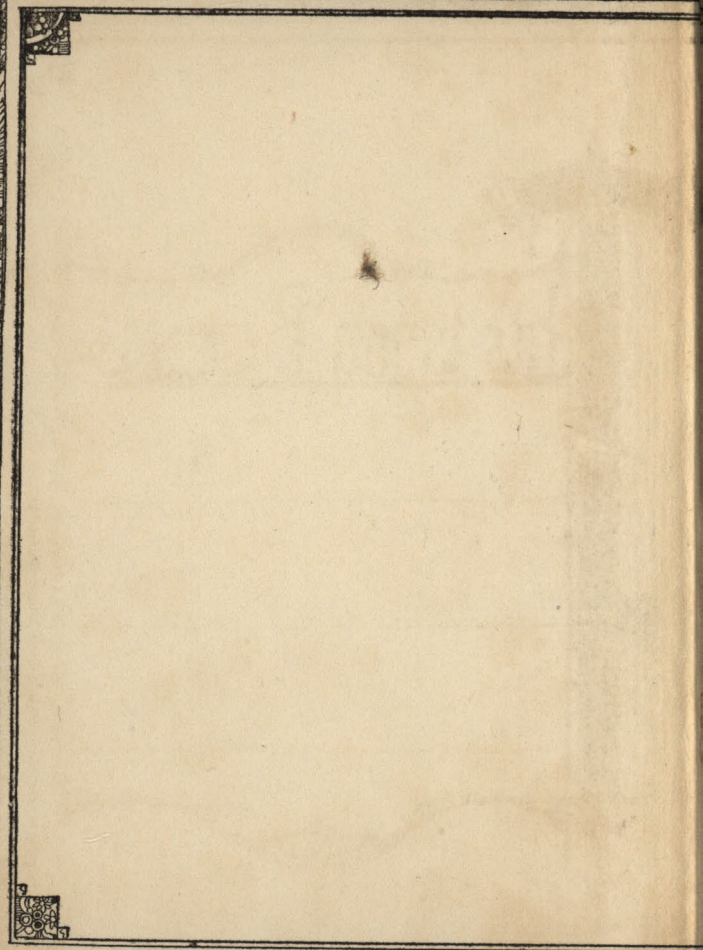
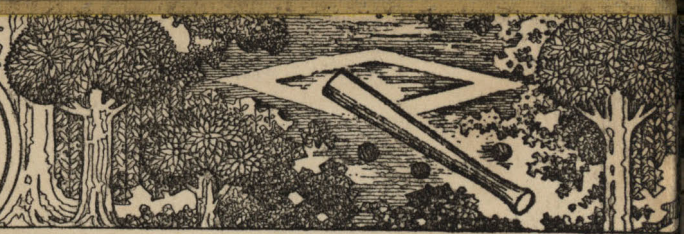
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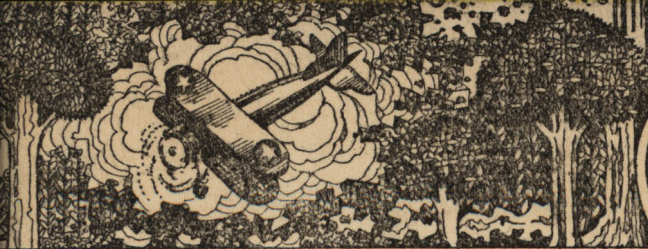
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"Bob Dexter and the Radio Mystery."

(See page 193)

BOB DEXTER AND THE RADIO MYSTERY

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BOB DEXTER AND THE RADIO MYSTERY

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BOB DEXTER AND THE RADIO MYSTERY

CHAPTER I

IN THE NEXT ROOM

THE Hotel Esplanade at Bellemar was crowded, for it was at the height of the summer season and the Esplanade, at this time of year, was considered the most fashionable stopping place along the coast. In a room on the fourth floor of the hotel, overlooking the sea, sat three discontented young men. They didn't care whether the Esplanade was fashionable or not. They had come here for a good time, and they were'nt having it.

"A fine spot this is," one of them, Harry Pierce, growled. "The people go around with their noses in the air like Pekingese dogs. And some of them look like Pekes, too."

"Aren't you right," chuckled Bob Dexter. "I saw one woman today coming in from the beach

who was a dead ringer for a Peke. She had some sort of fur neckpiece on, and her chin was up, and her eyes were glaring and she was sort of twinkling her nose. You know what I mean. She reminded me of one of those little dogs that are led around the park by butlers."

"Well, something may happen yet," consoled the third young man, Ned Fuller. "I never saw it to fail, when Bob is around. I'll bet if we went out into the desert a mystery would pop up for him to solve."

"Well by jingoes, as far as I can see, the only mystery around here is why we came," Harry exploded. "Whose idea was it, anyhow?"

"Bob's," Ned declared.

"Ned's," Bob cried.

"I thought so," Harry said. "In a minute you'd be picking on me. "Well, it doesn't make any difference. Here we are, and we'll have to make the best of it."

"The swimming is great," Bob asserted.

"And the food is good, too," Ned added. "This really isn't so bad. We can make our own time. We don't have to mix with these lolly-gaggers, or whatever they are."

"When we got that reward money from Ned's uncle, Mr. Bardley," Harry broke in, "I thought we were going to use it to take a vacation at some lake."

He referred to a check that Mr. Bardley, owner of a bank, had insisted on giving the three when Bob Dexter, with the aid of his two friends, succeeded in rescuing Ned's uncle from a gang who planned to rob the bank. These adventures were related in the book previous to this, "Bob Dexter and the Red Auto Mystery."

"But you were the first to advise coming here," Bob protested.

"I couldn't have been in my right mind," Harry declared. "Bellemar—beautiful sea! Well, it is pretty, I'll say that much for it. Say, what o'clock is it? Must be nearly supper time—pardon me, dinner time. I forgot where I was."

"Seven o'clock," Ned declared, looking at his watch. "The evening meal isn't served until seven-thirty," this in an affected voice.

"What say we take a ride in our new buggy?" Harry suggested. They had bought a small car with part of the reward money.

"We haven't time," Bob objected. He walked to a table in the center of the room and picked up a newspaper.

"The *Bellemar Bugle*," he read. "Quite a paper, this. Advertising on the front page. Electric refrigerators. Oil burners. Baby carriages reduced—that's news. Radios installed in your car—\$85. Hum. Listen to this, fellows. 'Double-dial radios, with short wave attachment. Pick up

police messages, ships at sea, airplane conversations. Turn of the dial brings you nationally broadcast programs.' Say, wouldn't it be swell if we could have one of those put in our bus?"

"What's that business about police messages?" Harry demanded.

"Why, these radios have a short wave attachment, so that besides picking up the regular programs—you know, from the big New York and Chicago stations—you can get the messages sent over short wave transmission, from police stations, airplanes, and so forth. Catch on now?"

"Can't exactly say that I do," Ned declared.

"Now listen," Bob continued. "You know that radio waves are like any other waves—that is, they are fluctuations in the ether, just as waves in the sea are fluctuations in the water. These waves carry the messages. The broadcasts from popular radio stations are carried on long waves, and only machines capable of receiving long waves, and translating them into sound, will reproduce these programs. On an ordinary radio set you can't get short waves, unless it has a special attachment. But these radios advertised here are arranged so that they receive both long and short waves. Police cars are equipped with short wave receivers, and they are tuned to the wave length of the sending stations."

"So if we had one of these radios in our car, we

could get police calls?" asked Harry excitedly.

"Sure we could—provided there's a police sending station around here," Bob replied.

"There is one," Ned declared. "The man at the desk told me they put one in not two months ago. The force in Bellemar has five police cars with radio in 'em."

"They have?" Bob asked in surprise. "I didn't think this place was big enough for that. But say, now that I think of it, we're not so very far from the Canadian border. They have a pretty efficient Coast Guard here, too, I understand."

"Yeah, there's a big station about four miles down the road," Ned said.

"To prevent the bringing in of contraband stuff," Bob declared.

"Liquor, you mean?" Harry inquired.

"Yes, or anything else that is under the control of the custom officials—like jewels, or dope."

"Do you think they ever try to bring stuff in here?" Ned wanted to know.

"Sure they do! Plenty. That's why I thought—"

"I get it!" Ned exclaimed. "It wasn't just because this was a fashionable resort that you wanted to come here, was it? You had an idea that we might see some excitement, didn't you?"

"Well, I wasn't sure what would happen," Bob admitted. "So far, we've been here five days, and it certainly has been quiet."

"Say, let's take a ride over to the Coast Guard station and talk to some of the men," Harry suggested. "I'll bet they could tell us some swell stories. And if we let them know that you've done some detective work, Bob—"

"That's out," Bob said decidedly. "I'm not going around posing as a detective. I managed to solve a few cases, but you fellows helped me, you remember. Don't get the idea that I think I'm one of these city sleuths."

The cases that Bob referred to were related in other books of this series. In the first, "Bob Dexter and the Club House Mystery," Bob, an orphan living with his uncle Joe Dexter at Cliffside, and working in his uncle's general merchandise store, proved his skill as a detective by unraveling the mysterious series of happenings in the club house. This made him eager for more adventures, and though, at first, his chums Ned Fuller and Harry Pierce were inclined to treat his "detecting" with levity, they soon came to realize that Bob had a real gift in this direction.

His next cases were the Beacon Beach mystery and the mystery of Storm Mountain. Then followed the airplane mystery, concerning a weird Chinese and the Jint San. After this Bob found the solution of the secret of the white stones, in "Bob Dexter and the Seaplane Mystery." The book just before the present one, describing Bob's

adventures with the Red Auto Mystery, already has been spoken of.

Now Bob and his friends were taking a vacation with the reward money they received for saving the bank from being robbed. At least it was supposed to be a vacation. Evidently Bob had other ideas.

"It won't do any harm to visit the Coast Guard, though," Bob declared after a moment. "I'd like to see their place."

"Maybe they have a short wave radio station too," Harry advanced.

"They probably do, to communicate with the revenue boats," Bob agreed. "Say, what do you fellows think about getting one of these short wave outfits in the car? We've got enough money to do it, I think. It only costs \$85."

"I'm all for it," Ned exclaimed, as he glanced out of the window at the ocean, purple now in the fading rays of the setting sun.

"How long will it take?" Harry asked.

"I'll call up and find out," Bob said, taking the paper from the table and going to the telephone. "Let's see—Bellemar, 324 is the number. Rapid Radio Installation Company. That sounds good."

He gave the number to the switchboard operator. In a few moments a voice answered, for the store was open evenings during the summer.

The man at the other end asked what kind of

a car it was, and Bob told him a touring car. The aerial could be put in the top.

"I can do it in a day and a half," the radio man assured him.

"That's fine," Bob said. "We'll bring you the car the first thing in the morning."

"Boy, that'll be swell," Ned exclaimed, as Bob put down the receiver.

"We can be riding along, and hear the police broadcast," Harry exclaimed. "If anything turns up—"

"I saw a cartoon once," Bob broke in, laughing, "that showed a police lieutenant talking through the 'mike' to a police car. He was saying 'Car number eight—calling car number eight—important message for car number eight—stop at the lunch wagon and bring in two Swiss cheese sandwiches on rye—' "

The others roared their appreciation.

"We could intercept that, and bring in the sandwiches ourselves," Harry chuckled.

"And maybe get a reward," Ned added.

"There's another Coast Guard station, over at Lookout Point," Bob said, "that is supposed to have one of the best short wave stations in the country. You know where the Point is—about fifteen miles from here. That's where a lot of smuggling is supposed to take place."

"We'll visit that, too," Harry exclaimed.
"Wouldn't it be great if we could—"

He stopped, and listened intently.

"What the mischief is that?" Bob cried.

Strange sounds were coming from the next room. It was connected by a door with theirs, but the door, of course, was locked.

"Sounds like some one struggling," Ned exclaimed, leaping to his feet. "Listen!"

A crash was heard, as though a chair was overturned. Then, in a muffled voice, some one screamed:

"Au secours! Au secours! 'elp—'elp me! Ah-h-h-h-h——"

CHAPTER II

NO INFORMATION

BOB DEXTER was the first to reach the door which separated the two rooms. He threw his shoulder against it, but the wood was stout, and it held.

"What's going on in there?" he yelled. "Open up!"

He put his ear to the panel, but heard only a slight rustling noise. There was no more shouting for assistance.

"Hey!" Bob called again. "What happened? Open the door!"

"Never mind, buddy," a voice replied smoothly. "Nothing to get excited about. My pal, here, just saw a big rat, and he got scared."

"Rat nothing," Ned exclaimed in a low voice. "There aren't any rats in the hotel."

"Shall I phone the manager's office?" Harry asked.

Bob nodded. But the question was heard by those in the next room, for another voice, deeper than the first, growled loudly:

"Never mind the manager. You guys take care

of your own business and we'll take care of ours."

"It's our business to see that a man isn't hurt in there," Bob retorted hotly.

"He's not being hurt, buddy," said the first voice. "We're just—"

"Ah-h-h, *mon Dieu*—"

"Shut up!"

"Open that door!" Bob yelled. "Open it, or we'll break it in! Harry, telephone the manager's office! Come on, Ned, help me here!"

Ned leaped to his side, and together they crashed their shoulders against the portal. They could feel the wood give.

"Cut that out, you guys, or we'll let you have it!"

Bob put his mouth close to Ned's ear.

"Smash it again," he whispered, "then jump to the right—I'll jump left! Now!"

With all their strength, they threw themselves against the door. The panel broke. As it did, Bob and Ned dodged quickly behind the wall, and only just in time.

Three shots, fired so quickly that they seemed like one report, poured through the opening and imbedded themselves in the wall opposite.

"There *are* rats in the hotel," Bob gasped. "Keep low, Ned! Harry, get out of the line of fire!"

Harry was crouched near one of the beds, tele-

phone in his hand. Frantically he juggled the hook.

"Come up to Room 404—quick!" he shouted into the transmitter.

Evidently the person at the other end heard and understood, for Harry slammed down the receiver.

"Shall we rush 'em?" Ned asked breathlessly.

Bob shook his head. Then, in a loud voice, he said:

"You birds are pretty bum shots—now we're coming in, and we don't miss! Let's have that gun, Harry—when I say three we start shooting! One, two—"

There was a sound of a key turning in the lock, and a door crashed open. Quickly Bob jumped toward their own door, opened it and glanced into the hall.

He saw two figures running toward the stairs. They didn't wait for the elevator, but disappeared through the fireproof door that led to the emergency exit.

"Now we can go in," Bob exclaimed, and Harry and Ned wondered at the cool way he said it.

Ned, who was close to the smashed portal, reached in and unlocked it. The three youths rushed into the next room.

There they saw a sight that caused them to start back in shocked surprise.

A small man was sitting in a chair, tied to the

back with cord. His head was on his breast, and a trickle of blood was running down on his white shirt, from his mouth. His shoes were off.

Bob tilted back his head. The man's eyes were closed. There was a livid wound on his cheek, and his lips were bruised and cut.

"Help me untie him," Bob said quickly. "I think they tried to give him the works."

They cut the ropes and then laid the man on the bed. He was slight in stature, and couldn't have weighed more than 110 pounds.

"What did they take his shoes off for?" Harry demanded.

"Never mind that now—get some water from the bathroom," Bob ordered. He loosened the man's shirt about the neck and then placed a hand on his heart.

"He's alive all right," Bob cried.

"What's going on here? Who fired those shots?"

At the doorway stood the hotel manager. Behind him was a larger man, evidently the house detective. Two bell-hops brought up in the rear.

Silently Bob motioned to the man on the bed. The manager came forward, and the house detective glanced at the smashed door.

"Did they get out that way?" he queried.

"No—we came in that way," Bob corrected. "We heard someone yell for help, and we broke in

the door. They fired three shots at us, and then beat it."

"In my hotel—all this business—guns—I can't have this—" The manager was spluttering incoherently, his first thought being of the possible scandal this would cause, with the consequent loss of business.

"You shouldn't let such people in your hotel," Bob said cuttingly. "Thanks, Harry."

He took the basin of water and cloth Harry handed him and bathed the man's face. The victim on the bed groaned, and moved his head.

"He's coming around," said the house detective. "Here, let me do that. Norcross, get a doctor as quick as you can, and stop that blubbing."

The detective took over the job of bathing the bruised face, while the manager, Norcross, stepped to the telephone.

"The doctor will be right up," he said a moment later.

Now the man on the bed opened his eyes and tried to talk.

"Just take it easy," the hotel sleuth told him soothingly. "You can talk later. Here, hold up a minute. There!" He placed a pillow under the man's head. Then he turned to Bob and the others.

"Let's have the details," he suggested. "I heard the shots and took it on the run for here. What happened, anyhow?"

Bob, to whom the question was addressed, told him quickly. The sleuth shook his head.

"Bad business," he said slowly. Then he pointed to the injured man's bare feet. "They were going to give it to him," he declared.

"What?" Ned asked.

"The *hot foot*. Try to make him talk. Put burning matches to the soles of his feet. It hurts plenty. They wanted to make him talk."

"*Ne parle pas*," the man on the bed groaned. "*Rien—rien—*"

"Any one know what he means?" the house detective asked.

"It's French," the manager exclaimed. "He said he won't speak—nothing—I guess he means that he doesn't know anything—"

"French, eh?" the detective mused. "That's funny."

"Why is it funny?" Bob demanded. "We're not so far from the Canadian border. This fellow is probably a Canadian, don't you think he is?"

"Yeah, but—well, here's the doc. Hello, doc. Got a little case of beating for you."

Silently the doctor, a small, efficient-appearing man, went about his business. He felt the pulse, then glanced carefully at the bruises. He bent over the bare feet, and nodded.

"He'll be all right," he said briefly. From his

bag he took a small vial, and went into the bathroom, appearing a moment later with a glass.

This he held to the lips of the man on the bed, who by this time was partly conscious.

"Drink," he commanded. "Drink it all!"

The lips moved, and with an effort the man swallowed. He shuddered, and color came into his face.

"That's the stuff," the doctor approved. "Boy—" this to one of the bell-hops, standing by with wide-opened eyes, "go down to my office and ask Miss Schaffer to give you a roll of bandages, adhesive, and my suturing outfit. I didn't bring it with me. I've got to take a few stitches in that lip."

"What about the fellows that got away?" Bob asked suddenly.

The house detective snapped his fingers. "By golly!" he said softly, and picked up the phone. He called a number.

"Hello—chief? Put him on. Harper speaking. No, I don't know how the Giants made out. They probably lost. Hello—Bill? Harper. Listen. We've had a little trouble at the hotel. Nothing very serious. Guy got beat up in one of the rooms. Yeah. Listen! We want to keep this out of the papers, understand? Give the place a bad name." He glanced toward the manager, who nodded emphatically. "All right. If you have to give it out,

ask the boys not to mention the name of the hotel. Just say 'a certain hotel in Bellemar, the name of which was withheld by the police.' Yeah. I'll do you a favor sometime.

"Now listen. Two guys got away. No, I didn't see 'em. Wait a second." He glanced toward Bob. "Can you give a description of the fellows you saw?" he asked.

"Well, one was pretty short and stocky, and the other taller," Bob said slowly. "I only saw their backs. The short one had on a cap, the other a soft hat. They were dressed in dark suits. One of them—the tall one—had light yellow shoes on."

The detective looked carefully at Bob. "Pretty good," he said admiringly. "I couldn't have gotten all that in one look. Thanks!"

He repeated Bob's description to the chief, and said:

"Looks like a case of gangsters. Rum runners, maybe. Broadcast the description to your police cars, will you? I'll find out, later, if any one saw them leave the hotel, and let you know. Yeah. Call you back in fifteen minutes, What? Sure I'll try to get him to talk, if he's well enough. The doc is here now."

He rang off, and turned to the doctor.

"What about it, doc—is he well enough to talk?"

The physician felt the man's pulse again.

"Sure," he said. "He hasn't been badly hurt. They didn't touch his feet. He's scared, mostly."

The detective approached the man on the bed.

"Open your eyes," he ordered.

The eyes opened, and gazed at him fearfully.

"Who did it, kid?" the sleuth asked softly.

"Who were they?"

The man shook his head wearily.

"Can't you talk?"

"Talk! No, I weel not talk! I don't know—eet ees 'orrible—*mon Dieu*—talk—*non! non! Rien!* No information—I weel geeve no information! If I do, they weel—*non!* No information!"

CHAPTER III

BOB CALLED IN

BOB and the others stared at the man in surprise. That he was terribly frightened was obvious, but it scarcely seemed reasonable that he would not tell the hotel detective all he knew about the men who mistreated him so severely.

"Listen, guy," Harper said sharply. "We want to help you. We're not going to hurt you—you don't have to be afraid of us. We're your friends. Now tell us—who were those birds that tried to give you the works?"

Again the man shook his head. "Nothing—I know nothing," he muttered. "Let me 'lone—go way—it is not that I can say anything! My mouth—eet hurts—"

"Sure, sure, we know. The doc here will fix that. All right. We'll talk to you later. Goin' to stitch him up now, doc?"

The bell-hop had returned with the things the physician requested. With a hypodermic syringe in his hand the doctor approached the man on the bed.

"What ees eet that you would do—I weel not talk—"

"Now, just take it easy," the doctor comforted. "This will only hurt for a second. It's novocaine. I want to fix that lip of yours. Just a second now—"

Dexterously he jabbed the needle into the man's flesh just above the lower jaw, and pressed the plunger. The man quivered, but did not attempt to draw his head away. After a moment the needle was withdrawn.

"There—that wasn't so bad, was it?" the physician asked cheerfully.

"*Non—c'est bien*," the man muttered.

"Wish he'd talk English," the house detective grumbled.

"Now we'll just wait until that takes effect, and I'll start to work. Say, what happened here, anyhow?"

He was told the story, and clicked his tongue against his teeth.

"There's been too much of that around here lately," he murmured. "I was called out on a case like this three days ago."

"Where was it?" Bob asked eagerly.

"Down by Lookout Point."

"Where the Coast Guard station is?"

"Yes. Not far from there. A man was found

back of the station about a mile, badly beaten. He's in the hospital. He wouldn't—"

Harper, realizing that the doctor was about to say "He wouldn't talk, either," nudged him, and the physician cut his words short.

"How did you happen to be called in on it?" the manager demanded. "That's fifteen miles away."

"I know it. The regular physician at the Point was on another case. Hey, you boys, get back, will you? Don't crowd around like that!"

The two bell-hops were pressing close to the bed, eager to see the extent of the man's injuries.

"Go back to your work," Norcross ordered sharply. "And don't talk about this—you hear? Don't say a word to anyone! If I find out you talked, you're fired! Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, sir, we understand."

"All right. Get out."

They left, hurriedly. Norcross turned to Bob.

"If it hadn't been for you and your friends," he said evenly, "this man might have been killed. He owes you something. So do I. When you check out of here, you'll find your bill arranged for."

"Oh, we couldn't do that," Bob protested. "We only—"

"I know. But it's the least I can do. And in re-

turn, I want you to promise me you won't go to the papers with this."

"Thought there was a joker somewhere," Ned said to Harry, *sotto-voce*. "He's afraid the hotel will get into trouble."

"We won't go to the papers," Bob promised. "We're not anxious for publicity, because if we—"

He stopped, and Harper, the house detective, looked at him sharply.

"You intend to mix in this?" he inquired.

Bob laughed carelessly. "Don't see any reason for it," he said. "Of course we're interested, because it happened right next to our room. But, after all, it's just a simple gang attack, don't you think?"

"Yeah—I guess so," and Harper turned away. Something in the man's tone led Bob to believe that it was not really so simple as it seemed on the face of it, and that Harper knew this. But Bob went no further along these lines, preferring to let events shape themselves.

The doctor now was ready to suture the cut lip. Bob and his friends watched him with interest, for it seemed that the stitching would hurt the man terribly and the physician might need some assistance. But the man never blinked an eyelash. The doctor went about his work as though he were operating on a bolt of cloth.

"Hurt at all?" he once asked the Canadian, and received a mumbled:

"Non!"

"Great stuff, that pain-killer," the doctor said off-handedly, as he put away his instruments. "Fifteen years ago, or so, we couldn't have done that. The man would have yelled blue murder. Look at the lip now—perfect job, if I do say it myself. He'll just have a slight scar. Say, they must have hit him pretty hard, and often, to cut him like that."

The Canadian nodded. "Ring," he exclaimed.

"Oh, so there was a ring on the hand that smacked you, was there?" Harper asked. "What kind of a ring?"

"Cannot say—maybe I can draw eet—"

"He seems to be more willing to talk, now,"

Ned said to Bob in an aside. "Maybe that anesthetic loosened his tongue."

"All right," Harper said loudly. "Here's a pen and paper." He procured one from the desk and handed it to the man, who was now sitting up in bed. With a trembling hand the Canadian drew a crude picture of something resembling a beetle.

"Why, that's a scarab!" Bob exclaimed.

"Huh?" Harper grunted. "What's that?"

"It's a sort of bug, which the old Egyptians used to worship because they thought it indicated resur-

rection," Bob explained. "I was reading about it the other day."

"I suppose you mean that this ring had a stone in it like the scarab, then," Harper asked.

"Yes, that's it. They used to carve these stones like the sacred beetle, and wear them for luck, or to protect themselves against evil, or something like that."

"Then we've got a real clue," Harper declared. "I'll phone that in to the chief. But say—" Suddenly he realized that he was talking to Bob as one detective might talk to another. "By the way," he asked casually, "you ever do any detective work?"

"A little," Bob answered modestly.

"He's done lots of it!" Harry burst out, unable to contain himself longer. "He stopped a bank from being robbed, and solved the mystery of the Jint San, and—"

"Hey, take it easy!" Bob said, laughing. "I was lucky enough," he explained, turning to Harper, "to hit on a few things which sort of unraveled the tangles. That's all. My friends here helped me."

"Is that so?" Harper asked interestedly. "Well, suppose you tell me your names."

They introduced themselves, and Norcross, the manager, said he was "proud" to have them stay at the hotel as long as they wished—entirely free.

"And if you succeed in catching the men who did this, it'll be a good advertisement for me," he added. "But until then, I don't want anything said about it."

"Sure not," Harper agreed. "But this isn't any mystery, Norcross. Just a couple of pals of this man having a little horse-play—hey, Frenchie?" and he winked at the man on the bed. "Still refuse to talk, eh?"

"*Non—I cannot talk,*" he muttered. "*C'est tres dangereux—*"

"Yeah, I guess it would be dangerous, for you," Harper declared, for he had caught that word. "Well, there's nothing left for me to do except to turn you over to the cops, and see if you'll talk to them. Say, Norcross, will you find out if any one saw those two bozos leave in a car? And telephone me here. I'll wait until our friend on the bed feels well enough to walk. I don't want to take him in the patrol wagon if I can help it."

"Good idea," Norcross approved. "I shall phone you. And I'll send up a carpenter to fix that door. See you all later." He waved a hand, and was gone.

"This place is not only the apple of his eye, but his heart and lungs and everything else," Harper said cynically. "But he's all right, at that. Can't blame him for wanting to keep this out of the papers. They only have one season here, and it's

a fairly short one. A thing like this would about kill the trade. Well, sonny"—this to the Canadian—"feel like taking a little walk?"

"He can walk all right," said the doctor. "Where are his shoes?"

They were found in a corner of the room, and placed on the man's feet. By this time it was quite dark, and the lights in the room were aglow. Harper was waiting for the phone call from Norcross. It came. No one had seen the two men leave the hotel.

"Well, I didn't expect they would," Harper said resignedly. "Now I'll tell Bill that."

He called the Police Chief, and relayed what information he had to him, especially the bit about the ring.

"And I'm sending Frenchie on down to Headquarters," he added. "I'll get a couple of husky bell-hops to take him. He won't try to get away—he's too scared. Treat him good, chief. He's in sort of bad shape. Let him sleep in the witness room. And I'll call you in the morning. Yeah. O. K. Be good. So long!"

"We'll be getting back to our room," Bob said.

"Wait a second. You three had supper yet?"

It seemed good to hear it called supper again.

"No, we haven't," Bob answered.

"Then suppose you come along with me. Won't promise you as fancy stuff as you'll get here, but

it'll taste as good. I want to talk to you anyhow. All right, Frenchie, on your feet. Thanks, doc!

They went to the elevator, and in the lobby Frenchie was turned over to two of the largest bell-hops, who started for headquarters with him. Then Harper led the way out a side door. It was quite dark, for there was no moon, and the street lights were far apart.

"I'll tell you," the hotel detective said, as they walked along. "The real reason I wanted you three to come with me, is that I think that you can help me. As a matter of fact, I'm up to my neck right now. I don't want to get over my head."

"Yes?" said Bob politely, although he hadn't the slightest idea what the detective was talking about, nor had the others.

"Yeah. This wasn't a simple case of assault. There's more to it than that. There's a gang of counterfeiters working around here, and they're flooding the country with bad money—flooding it, I tell you! And we can't stop 'em! They're wise to all the regular tricks of cops and detectives, and they seem to know every man on every police force around here. We've got to have outside help—someone who isn't known to be a detective."

He stopped beneath a lamp post, and glanced at Bob.

"Well, what do you say, Dexter?" he demanded.

CHAPTER IV

LUKE EXPLAINS

THE question was so sudden that Bob, for a moment, did not know what to say. He looked at Ned and Harry as though asking their advice.

"Of course I want your friends in on it too," Harper said quickly. "But you seemed to know more about this racket and I, naturally—"

"He does, too," Harry exclaimed. "We're just props."

"You are not!" Bob cried vehemently. "If it weren't for you fellows I never could have done the things I did!"

"Well, what do you say, then?" Harper asked again.

"What do *you* say?" Bob demanded of Harry and Ned.

"What do you think we'll say?" Ned asked, grinning. "As far as I'm concerned, I'd like nothing better!"

"You're in, then?" Harper inquired eagerly.

"I guess so," Bob replied, laughing. "I don't know how much we can help you, because we don't

know what we're up against. But we'll do all we can."

"Great! That's all I want. Now here's the situation." Harper looked about him carefully. The street, except for these four, was deserted. It ran back from the beach toward a less populated part of town, beyond which was a sparsely settled residential section.

"Here's the layout," Harper continued. "In the first place, there hasn't been much publicity about it, for several reasons. One of them is that certain banks aren't anxious to have people know there is so much counterfeit money in circulation. It might start a panic, and goodness knows, in these times, that's to be avoided at all costs. So we'll have to work pretty secretly."

"That's how Bob does his best work," Harry broke in.

"Good! Also, that's the reason I fell in so easily with Norcross when he wanted the incident at the hotel kept out of the papers. It wasn't just to protect the hotel that I agreed to that—it was to help us, too."

"Pardon me for interrupting," Bob said, "but are you really a house detective—and nothing more?"

Harper grinned at him. "No, I'm not just a hotel detective," he admitted. "I'm working for the Government—under cover. I got a job at the

Esplanade because we figure that the counterfeiters have their headquarters around here some place—at least they do some of their work near here. Not the actual counterfeiting, perhaps, but this, we think, is the point where a good part of the money is brought to be put in circulation.”

“Doesn’t Norcross know you’re in the employ of the Government?” Bob asked.

Harper shook his head emphatically. “By no means,” he declared. “As far as he’s concerned, I’m just a dumb cop—and the dumber the better.”

“You don’t think that Norcross—” Ned began.

“No, I really don’t,” Harper replied. “I give Norcross a clean bill. He’s not in it. But his hotel may be.”

“What do you mean?” Bob wanted to know.

Harper spread his hands wide. “I’m not sure of anything, yet,” he admitted. “I’m just working in the dark. Now listen. You know at the Coast Guard station at Lookout Bay, just off the Point, there’s a pretty powerful wireless station, for communication with the revenue boats.”

“Yes, I’ve heard there is,” Bob said.

“Well, lately, at the station there has been received some strange series of code messages. They appear to come from a short wave set, which can’t be located.”

“That’s funny,” Ned exclaimed. “We were fig-

uring on having a set with a short wave attachment put in our auto."

"Yeah? Well, you ought to have some fun with it. I don't think it'll help us, though. But you can't tell. Anyhow, you can hear the police messages. I'll have it tuned for you so that it will receive the signals sent out from Headquarters. They've got police cars here, you know, fitted with radio."

"That's what we heard," Harry declared.

"Yeah. Well, I'll fix that up for you. But now about this counterfeiting business. Wait—we're almost at my place. We'll go in and talk it over there."

They were approaching a small house on a side road, separated by several hundred yards from the houses on either side. It was a pleasant place, with vines growing over a tiny porch, and a home-like look about the house.

"You live here, then?" Ned asked. "I thought you stayed at the hotel."

"Yes, I live here. With my wife. We took it for the summer. We could have lived at the hotel, but she hates hotels—especially ones like the Esplanade."

"Don't blame her," Ned said in a low voice. "If I had to stay there three or four months it would send me cuckoo."

"That's how she figured. Come on in, I'll introduce you."

They mounted the steps, and Harper let himself in with a key.

"Mary!" he called. "I've got visitors. They'll be here for supper. Come on down."

"Right away, Lucius!" answered a cheerful voice. Harper smiled at the boys.

"That's my first name," he whispered, "but she's the only one I allow to call me that. Everyone else calls me Luke."

"O. K.," Bob said, grinning. "We'll remember."

A few moments later a bright faced woman, rather small, with dark, wavy hair, descended the stairs. She went up to Harper and kissed him, then faced the others.

"This," Harper announced proudly, "is my wife, Mrs. Harper." And he introduced Bob and his friends. "My best friend," Harper went on, half laughing, "and my severest critic."

"And a good cook, if I do say it myself," Mrs. Harper added. "Boys, I'm glad to meet you. Come right in. I've got roast beef tonight. I was hoping Lucius would bring some friends, for we couldn't possibly eat it all ourselves."

"Listen, Mary," Harper broke in, "how about Luke for a while? You know, instead of Lucius?"

"Lucius is your name, isn't it?" his wife demanded.

"Yes, but—"

"Then I'll continue to call you Lucius until you have it changed by a court of law." And she winked at Bob.

She led the way to the dining room, and Harper nudged Harry.

"That's our regular act," he whispered. "Every night I ask her to call me Luke, and every night she says the same thing. But some day I'll fool her. I will get it changed."

The meal was a splendid one, enlivened by bright conversation. Nothing was said about the counterfeiting, and of course the boys would take no initiative in mentioning it. After supper they all sat on the porch for a while, until Mrs. Harper asked to be excused, so that she could help the maid with the dishes. When she was gone, Harper drew his chair closer to Bob's.

"I never like to bother her with my affairs," he explained. "Sometimes she worries. Now let's see. Suppose we go in the parlor, where there is more light."

Under a table lamp he showed the boys a ten dollar bill.

"What do you think of that?" he demanded.

They examined it carefully. Harry had another ten in his pocket, and they compared the two.

"I can't see any difference," Bob conceded.

"Neither can I," Harry agreed, and Ned said the same.

"Of course you can't. These bills are the best counterfeiting that has been done in years. That's why we absolutely have to get the gang. These almost fool experts."

"Is there any difference?" Bob asked.

"Sure there is! But you'd need a pretty powerful glass to find it out, and even then you might miss it. You see the tiny threads in the bill—those little red and green specks?"

He pointed them out. They were rather faint, but could be seen by close inspection.

"Well," he went on, "those are right in the paper. Somehow the counterfeiters have found a way to duplicate those exactly. And it's no easy job, either."

"I'll say it isn't," Bob muttered. "I don't see how anyone could copy those, exactly."

"Well, they do. Heaven knows where they make the paper. We can't find out. And what a system they've got! Several times we had what we thought were straight tips, that a quantity of these bills were about to be floated. We followed up the tips, and—nothing." He sighed. "This has been going on now for three months. In that time they must have circulated—well—I'd hate to imagine how many of these bills. We're afraid even to estimate."

"Are they all tens?" Harry inquired.

"Nope. Tens and fives. I haven't got a fake five with me, but it wouldn't do any good to show you one. You couldn't tell the difference. Oh, these birds are clever, all right!"

"And where does the wireless station come in on this?" Bob wanted to know.

"Well, they've got to have some sort of a communication system! Evidently this gang has agents all around this part of the country. I, myself, have the theory that they're using wireless. I may be wrong. In fact I haven't told my chief about that idea yet. I"—he grew a bit red—"I didn't want to be laughed at."

"I know how you feel," Bob declared. "I've had to take a lot of kidding myself."

"Yeah? Anyhow, I'm keeping it to myself, for a while. Now look. Here are you three fellows, just down here for a vacation, see? You're new to the place. You want to meet people, see things, have a good time. All right. What's the first thing a man staying at a hotel does, if he wants to see the town?"

He looked at Harry, then at Ned.

"Buy a guide book," Ned replied.

"Oh, no he wouldn't," Bob corrected. "He'd get acquainted with the boys at the hotel, and ask them."

"Right!" Harper exploded. "You hit it exactly."

That's what I want you fellows to do. I have a hunch—it may be a wrong one—that in the hotel lies a clue that will lead us to the counterfeiter. And before today it was just an *idea*. Now it's a *hunch*—since that assault on Frenchie."

"You think he was mixed up in the counterfeiters?" Ned asked excitedly.

"I think he knows something about 'em. Whether he got that knowledge accidentally or not I don't know. He may have stumbled on it. But we'll have him investigated, and in a few days we may have something. In the meantime—" he pushed his hand beneath the cloth on the table. "Under cover!"

"We get it," Bob said quietly. "We'll do the best we can, Mr. Harper."

"Not Mr. Harper—and not Lucius. Luke!"

"O. K., Luke," Bob laughed.

Then Harper's face became serious.

"I don't want you fellows to get wrong ideas about this," he said slowly. "This gang is well organized. And they'll fight any attempt to round 'em up with any weapons at their command. This job you're taking on, my friends, is no play. It's dangerous work—plenty dangerous!"

CHAPTER V

THE MESSAGE

Two days later Bob, going through the lobby of the hotel, was handed a note by one of the bell-boys:

"Meet me corner of Spillane avenue and Dur-yea street, half hour. Luke."

Bob had been on his way to the pool, where Ned and Harry were waiting for him.

"They'll just have to wait, that's all," he decided. "I've got to see what Harper wants. In the meantime I'll call up that radio place and find out if our car is ready."

He returned to his room, and put through the call.

"How soon will you have that touring car ready?" he demanded.

The man at the other end appeared uneasy.

"Well, I'll tell you, buddy," he said, "we struck a little trouble. There's interference that we can't seem to do away with."

"What kind of interference—outside?"

"Huh?"

"I say you mean interference from the motor, or interference from another source?"

"Why—why—from the motor, of course!" But there was a hesitancy in his voice, which Bob noted. "We'll have to put extra-long spark plugs on—the non-leaking kind. I think that's where the noise comes from. You call us up this afternoon, will you?"

"Yep! Good-bye!"

He sat on the bed and stared out of the window. "Interference," he mused, and then laughed. "I mustn't start imagining things. He must have meant electric interference. Wonder what Luke wants? I haven't got much to report to him—maybe they got Frenchie to talk."

Bob hung around the hotel a while, then went to keep his appointment with the detective. He left word at the desk that if his friend phoned, to tell them he had to go out on business, and that he'd see them at lunch.

Luke was waiting for him on the appointed corner.

"We got a report on Frenchie," the detective said, without preliminaries.

"You did?" Bob asked eagerly. "Anything in it?"

"I'll say there is! Take a look at this."

He handed Bob a folded paper. Bob opened it, and read:

"Department of Justice, Province of Quebec.

"Re: Report on Anton Blanche, al. Meurice Leval, al. Pierre Tens, al. Francois Ledoux, etc. Requested by Federal Authorities, United States of America.

"Born 1896 in La Tuque, Quebec. Parents farmers. Blanche first came to attention of authorities in 1921, when he was arrested for participation in cattle swindle. Served one year. In 1923, arrested for attempted extortion—no disposition. In 1924, arrested in connection with lottery fake—no disposition. In 1926, arrested on charge of using mails to defraud—fined \$1,000, six months in jail.

"Since that time, no report on him.

"Ostensible occupation, radio operator and technician."

"Well?" Harper said, when Bob had finished.

"The last part is what interests me," Bob declared. "Radio operator and technician!"

"Yep. I thought your eye would light on that. Now we can guess why those birds were bearing down on him in the hotel. Either they wanted him to work for them and he refused, or he has worked for them, and is in on some of their secrets, and they were afraid he'd spill the works."

"If it was the last," Bob said slowly, "don't you

think they'd be more likely to take him for a ride?"

"Well, maybe yes; maybe no. If he was in for a while, and then wanted to get out, they may have used a little persuasion to urge him to follow along."

"That's right—I never thought. Say, has he talked at all?"

"Yeah, he's talked plenty—all in French. So we got an interpreter and he shut up like a clam. Says his lips hurt him too much to talk. But it doesn't seem to interfere much with his eating."

"What's the next move?"

"How have you been making out, since I saw you last?"

"Not so well," Bob confessed. "I talked to a couple of the boys around the place. Said I was looking for an easy way to make a little money, and to have some fun at the same time. They shied away from the topic—all except one man, the night porter."

"What did he say?"

"Well, he took me aside and asked me how much I wanted to invest. I told him a few hundred dollars. He got all excited, and grabbed me by the coat, so I couldn't get away." Bob laughed.

"And what was his scheme?"

"Why, he has a brother who has a fast touring car. He says if I supply the capital, his brother

will get a car load of liquor, shoot it over the border, bring it to Bellemar, and sell it at a thousand per cent. profit. My split would be half," and Bob laughed again.

"I see," Harper said, grinning. "The old racket. But I'll tell you—I wouldn't be a bit surprised if this gang we're after went in for bootlegging on the side, too. Suppose you just sound that porter out a bit more."

"Sure! I'll do it tonight. Say, I wonder if Ned and Harry and I could visit the Coast Guard station at Lookout Point this afternoon? I'd like to get a peep at their wireless sending station."

"Sure you can. I'll fix it up for you. I won't be able to go, but I'll telephone ahead. Why? Have you got a lead there?"

"No, I haven't," Bob admitted. "But I'd like to see it, and talk to the guards."

"O. K. You go ahead. How about that set you were going to put in the car?"

"It's supposed to be ready today."

"Good. I've got to beat it now. Listen, have you got my home phone number?"

"No, I haven't."

"Well, I'll write it down for you, it's a private number, so don't lose it." Harper gave it to Bob, then said:

"So long for a while. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Right. So long!"

They parted, and Bob went on to the pool. Harry and Ned were sitting on the side.

"Hey, where have you been?" Harry called.

Bob winked. "Little business. Say, they got a report on that Canuck," and he told them of the paper Harper had shown him.

"A radio operator, eh?" Harry muttered. "That sounds interesting. Do you suppose—"

"Can't tell. Say, I fixed it up so we can visit that Coast Guard station this afternoon, and get a look at their set."

"Boy, that's swell!" Ned exclaimed.

"We'll start around three o'clock. I think the car will be ready then. How's the water?"

"Fine. Coming in?"

"You bet!"

Until lunch time they swam and lay in the sun, then went back to the hotel. Norcross, who was standing by the desk, greeted them effusively.

"Enjoying your stay, boys?" he asked.

"Sure are," Ned replied.

"That's fine. Glad to hear it. Er—you haven't said anything to anybody about—you know—"

"Not a word," Bob said solemnly. "Did it get in the papers?"

"No, it didn't, thanks to you. If you fellows want anything around here, let me know. Be glad to get it for you."

As they were going in to lunch, Harry said to Bob:

"Somehow I don't quite trust that Norcross. He seems—too—I don't know exactly how to express it—"

"Effusive?"

"Yeah, that's the word. Sort of fawning."

"I thought that too. But it may be that he's just anxious to show us his good will. What the mischief, we haven't any right to kick. We're here on the arm, aren't we?"

"You mean free? So he said. We'll see later."

Soon after lunch they called the radio shop, and learned that their car was ready. They lost no time in getting it, for they were anxious to try the radio.

"If you put the top down, you won't get such good reception," the man told them. "The aerial is in the top. Now look! Here's your volume control, and here's how you tune it. This switch is to change it to short wave reception. It'll be \$125."

"What—\$125!" Ned exclaimed. "You advertised \$85!"

"That's for either short or long wave reception—not for both. I had a tough time with this—couldn't get the interference out. But now it's perfect. I'd like to see you have a set like that put in any place else for \$125!"

"All right," Bob said. "Will you take a check on a local bank?"

"Yeah! I'll take a check."

A week ago the boys had opened a checking account, for they didn't want to go through the nuisance of banking with the hotel, which meant getting someone to open the safe every time they wanted money.

A few minutes later they were riding toward the Coast Guard station at Lookout Point.

"Now let's try it," Ned said eagerly. The three boys were sitting in the front seat, Bob driving. "Turn it on, Bob."

The control box, a small affair, was attached to the steering column easily reached by the driver. Bob switched it on, and waited until the tubes became heated.

"Here's New York," he said, and turned the tuning knob. A voice crooned:

"When I look in your eyes, you make me realize, you've got me in the—"

"Get something else," Ned advised. "Try it on short wave, Bob."

The switch was on the dashboard, and Bob turned it. For some time, as they rode along, they got nothing but static, and some commercial stuff. Then, suddenly, a voice in the loud speaker said:

"One A. M.—one A. M.—off Lookout—off Lookout—Tuesday—one A. M.—off Lookout—"

Then, silence.

CHAPTER VI

AT THE COAST GUARD STATION

"WHAT in thunder do you suppose that meant?" Harry demanded.

Bob shook his head and tried to tune the dial a bit finer, to see if there was any more to the message. Then he stopped the car and cut the ignition, so that the motor noise would be obviated.

"It might be from some amateur," he said, "making a date with someone. Or it might be anything else."

"One A. M.—Tuesday—off Lookout," Ned mused aloud. "I wonder how far off Lookout?"

"Might be a hundred yards, might be five miles," Bob said. "Of course there's a possibility that the message was sent by a rum-runner to his pals, telling them that he'll anchor off Lookout Point and warning them to be there to transfer cargo."

"Think we better tell the Coast Guard?" Harry asked.

"They may have picked up the same message. We'll try to sound 'em out. But it's funny that a rum-runner wouldn't use code for his messages,

instead of telephony. Anyone who was tuned in right could have picked that up."

"I wonder," Ned said slowly, "if it was sent deliberately, to throw the authorities off the track. I mean to make them believe something was going on off Lookout Point, then the criminals could operate someplace else, without too much risk of getting caught."

"Say, that's an idea," Bob exclaimed. "You're stealing my racket, Ned. Well, let's be on our way. We'll see what the Coast Guard has to say about it."

They started the car again, and Bob tried to pick up some more short wave stuff, but was unsuccessful. They had to be content with music, sent out by a New York station. The radio in the car worked remarkably well, the reception being clear and free from electrical interference from the motor.

"Must have this set shielded pretty well," Bob commented. "I know it's hard to shield perfectly a receiving set in an airplane, because of the constant discharge from the spark plugs. The radio man did a good job on this, even if he did soak us more than we expected to pay."

Lookout Point was a promontory, extending about a quarter of a mile out into the sea. On the tip was located the Coast Guard station. On the other side of the Point the land curved inward,

making a sort of harbor, called Lookout Bay. Here the water was quite calm, and it was a paradise for fishermen. When the fish were running, one man in a boat could catch enough to bring him in \$10 or \$15.

"We can't drive right up to the station," Bob said. "Too sandy. We'd better park here, and walk."

He locked the ignition, and took out the radio key, without which the set could not be turned on.

On their way to the station, which was across a sandy stretch, they talked of the car radio, and anticipated a good deal of fun out of it.

"We ought to learn code," Harry suggested. "I'll get a book on short wave radio, and we'll study up a little. It may help us."

Pausing on the edge of the Bay, they watched a small launch approach, probably containing a fisherman. The boat had a cabin on it and could, Bob thought, go out the Bay into the ocean, if the weather were not rough.

It came toward a dock, and Harry suggested they walk over and see what luck the man had.

"I'd like to do a little fishing while I'm here," Harry went on. "I haven't fished in a long time. Used to be pretty good, too. I remember the time that—"

"Let it go," Ned grunted. "None of your fish

stories. Come on, if you want to see what he caught."

The man was tying the boat to the dock as they approached.

"How'd you make out?" Harry called.

The man, an elderly, grizzled chap with kindly eyes, looked at them.

"Made out all right," he said. "Got some blue fish, and two sea bass. One of 'em weighs close to twenty pounds. Want to buy some fish?"

"No," Harry replied, "but we'd like to do some fishing. Do you rent out this boat?"

"Not this one. Over there—see, 'bout quarter of a mile around the Bay—Jim Gluts rents boats."

"Thanks. Let's see the big bass, will you?"

"Sure!"

He reached under one of the seats, and held up the fish.

"Beauty, ain't she?" he demanded.

They agreed that it was. After talking a while longer about fishing, they started again for the Coast Guard station.

"Nice old guy," Harry said. "Bet he's lived here all his life."

As they neared the station, they saw two men trudging across the sand, toward the sea. They were quite far away, but something about them seemed familiar to Bob. He grasped Harry's arm excitedly.

"See those two fellows?" he exclaimed.

"Yeah."

"I think I've seen them before. Something about the way they walk. That short one especially—by golly—"

He cut his words short, and started to run.

"Hey!" Ned called. "What's the idea?"

"Come on! Those men—they're the two I saw running down the hotel hall! Let's get 'em!"

"The two you saw—oh, you mean the two that beat up Frenchie! O. K.—we'll try to—"

The three were running across the sand. At that moment the two men turned, and saw them. Immediately they took to their heels.

"We'll never get 'em, now," Ned panted. "Got too good a head start."

He was right. The fugitives reached the water's edge, and leaped into a small motor boat that was beached. One of them pushed off. The ocean was calm, almost like a lake. The boys could hear the sound of the motor as the boat sped away, across the Bay.

"Well," Bob said, stopping, "that's that." He drew several long breaths. "I wonder what they were doing at the Coast Guard shack?"

"Maybe they've got friends there," Harry suggested.

"I doubt it. Come on, let's get to the station. Something funny about this."

They hurried toward their objective. Mounting the steps, they knocked, and the door was opened by a tall, good-looking man with a pipe in his mouth.

"Howdy," he said carelessly. "What can I do you for?"

"I'm Bob Dexter," the young detective said rapidly. "These are my friends, Ned Fuller and Harry Pierce. Did Mr. Harper phone that we were coming?"

"Oh, yeah—sure. That's right. Come on in. Want to look around, I suppose?"

"Yes, we'd like to. But listen! Were two men here a few minutes ago?"

"Two men? What two men?"

"A tall fellow, and one shorter."

"Nope. I haven't seen any one. I've been here all day, sitting around. Nobody came that I saw."

"That's funny," Bob muttered. "We saw 'em come out from here."

"Are they friends of yours?"

"I should say not! They're—" he recalled Harper's admonition to say little about the occurrence at the hotel, but he decided that it would be better to tell this man who those two fellows were.

"Three days ago," he said, talking fast, "a man was beaten up in one of the rooms at the Esplanade. We're staying there. We broke in the room and two fellows ran out. I caught a glimpse of them as

they went down the hall. I think those are the two we saw get in a boat just now."

"Hum!" The tall man took several puffs on his pipe. "Is that so? Well, now, that's right interesting! And you think they were at the station, eh?"

"We don't know. They came from this direction."

"Is that so? Well, I didn't see anyone. Say, what are you guys, amateur detectives or something?"

Bob felt he was laughing at them, and flushed.

"Not exactly," he muttered. "But we thought if we could catch those birds—"

"So we have visitors!"

A stout, pleasant-faced man, middle-aged, stood in the doorway. His hair was slightly gray, and his eyes were the deepest blue that Bob had ever seen.

"I know who you are," he boomed. "The three fellows Harper phoned about. Come right in, come right in! Why didn't you tell me they were here, Trent?"

"They just came, captain. They were talking about two men they thought were here and ran away."

"What? What's that?"

Bob, in a few words, repeated the story he had told Trent. The Captain, whose name was Philip Moore, frowned.

"I don't like that much," he grunted. "We've been having a lot of trouble with petty gangsters

lately. Most of 'em are kids that grow up on a diet of blood-and-thunder detective books, and go to too many cheap movies. They think they're hot stuff."

"These weren't kids, captain," Bob exclaimed.

"Weren't, hey? Well, Trent, did you see 'em?"

"No, captain, I didn't. And I've been here all afternoon."

"Well, they're gone now, anyway. Won't be any use to chase 'em. I'll tell the boys to be on the watch for 'em. What did they look like?"

Bob told him. He ordered Trent to write out the description, and tell the other men about it.

"Now let's have a look around," he continued.

"What are you particularly interested in?"

"The wireless room," Bob said promptly.

"You are, hey? Know anything about wireless?"

"Not much," Harry replied. "But we just got a set for our car. It receives short wave transmission."

"Does, hey? Well, you ought to have fun with that. Come along, and have a look at our station."

He led the way upstairs, and to a large room facing the sea. Within was a splendid sending set. Two men were seated at a desk, and the boys could hear the shrill buzz-buzz-buzz as a message winged its way through the ether.

"This is it," Captain Moore announced. "Jack!"

One of the men turned.

"Busy?"

"No, not very, captain."

"Will you show these boys what it's all about?
Friends of mine."

"Sure, captain! Glad to!"

"This is Jack Benchly, fellows," Moore said.
"Jack, meet Bob Dexter, Ned Fuller and Harry
Pierce. They're interested in short wave trans-
mission and reception."

"Fine! Well, suppose we start on the receiving
set. Right here. Now—"

He stopped, and turned to Moore.

"Say, do you smell smoke?" he demanded.

"Smoke? Why—by jingoes, look!"

He pointed to a far corner. A curl of smoke
arose, and then a tiny flame licked out.

"The room is on fire!" Moore yelled.

CHAPTER VII

THE SCARAB

THE radio operator who was sending out the message glanced around and then bent to his work. There was nothing of panic in his look, simply a normal curiosity to see what was happening; and, having seen, he returned to his task.

But Captain Moore was hopping around like a chicken with his head cut off.

"On fire, on fire!" he yelled. "The dirty rats fired the radio room! I'll get 'em for that!"

The boys stared at him, a bit puzzled. It seemed unusual that a Coast Guard captain, used to all sorts of emergencies, should fly off the handle in this manner. What was needed was not words, but action.

"Have you got an extinguisher here?" Bob asked Captain Moore.

"Hey? What's that? An extinguisher? There's one downstairs! Tell Trent to come up here, Jack! Say, it's burning worse than ever!"

Jack, the one who had been detailed to show the boys around, leaped for the stairs. A crackling

could now be heard, seeming to come from beneath the flooring.

"The whole place is on fire!" Moore gasped. "The radio station will be ruined! Jimmie, you'd better come out of that!"

"Just a second, captain—have this message through in a second—"

Still the high-pitched buzzing sounded through the room and a moment later it ceased, in a dying note that ran down into silence. Jimmie arose.

"My gosh," he exclaimed, "the room is on fire!"

Jack was now back again, with a pump extinguisher in the hand. But it was useless here, for the flame was between the beams.

Trent, the man who had admitted Bob and the other, came up the stairs carrying an ax.

"We'll have to break that flooring to get at the fire," he panted, and swung the ax.

"Wait a second!" Bob yelled. "That'll only create a draft. The fire seems centered on the outside—at least it started there." He ran to a side window. "Why," he exclaimed, "there's a ladder against the side of the building—and that's where the fire is!"

"What!"

Captain Moore rushed over and stuck his head out. Then he began to mouth strange epithets.

"Who left that ladder there?" he shouted.

"Someone's going to get disciplined for this!"

"Why—I left it there," Trent mumbled. "I intended to put some paint on the—"

"Never mind that now!" Captain Moore became calmer, and turned to the man who held the extinguisher. "Jack, run down and climb that ladder. You can flood the fire with that chemical. If whoever set this fire—" he paused, and repeated grimly: "if whoever set this fire had sense enough to take the ladder away, we'd have had a tough time of it."

About ten feet below the window, in the radio room, was a small ledge, part of the roof over the porch. It was here the fire had started. Certainly it did not seem possible that it could have occurred accidentally. The only theory on which the accident could be supported was that insulation had rubbed off a wire, created a short circuit, and so the fire resulted.

Jack was on the ladder, now, spraying the heart of the fire with the extinguisher. He kept this up until only a haze of smoke remained. But fire in, or beneath, a radio room is too dangerous to take any chances with, so Captain Moore put in a call to the chief of the Bellemar Fire Department.

"Chief," he said, "this is Moore, at the Coast Guard station. We just had a funny fire here. Yeah, it's out now. But I want you to come over, with a couple of good men, and have a look at it. To me it looks like incendiarism. Hop over quick,

will you? And—keep this under your hat. Tell you why later.”

Captain Moore himself then climbed the ladder, to see that there was no present danger of the fire breaking out again. He saw just a damp mass of smoking wood.

“Certainly is queer,” he mused aloud. “Say, Jack, any of your wires run near here?”

“Sure—the lead-in wire, from that electric light pole,” and he pointed. “But that insulation is O. K. We examined it last week.”

“Might have worn through,” the captain muttered. “We’ll wait ’till Chief Toohey gets here. In the meantime—” suddenly he swung toward Bob, as a thought struck him. “Say! Those two men that you saw! How did they come out from this building—I mean from what side?”

“From the side where the fire occurred,” Bob said simply.

Captain Moore snapped his fingers. “Jingoes,” he exploded. “Trent, you say you left that ladder there?”

“Yes, sir.” The tall guardsman seemed ill at ease. “I was going to do a little painting today, and—”

“Fined two weeks pay,” Captain Moore snapped. “No, wait a second.” He rubbed his mouth with his hand. When he spoke again it was in a lower voice. “I’ll take that back. I suppose

it wasn't your fault. You couldn't tell that the men were firebugs. Just forget that fine. After all, any man has a right to leave a ladder up if he intends to paint. Nothing in that." He appeared, now, like the man who greeted the boys downstairs. His excitable manner was gone, and his eyes were kindly.

The radio apparatus had not been damaged, and Jimmie again took his post at the key. The others went downstairs to await the arrival of the fire chief. This was no time for Bob and the others to finish their inspection of the radio room. That would have to wait until later.

Chief Toohey arrived shortly afterward, and examined the scene of the fire. After a thorough inspection he reported:

"There's a break in the insulation of a wire leading to the radio room. Part of the wood around it is rotten, and dry. The blaze was due to this. It wasn't set. I'd advise that this be fixed immediately, and all your wires gone over carefully, or you'll be having more fires."

"Then it wasn't set after all?" Moore asked, and Bob thought there was a disappointed note in his voice.

"Nope. Not as far as I can determine. Now you better get right after the rest of your wires. Have them all gone over."

"O. K., chief. Thanks a lot for coming. Here, have a cigar—you boys have one too?" and Cap-

tain Moore passed around the box. The chief and his two helpers each took several. The boys passed them up, of course.

"We'll be on our way now," Toohey said. "So long, Moore. Remember what I told you."

"Right, chief! So long!"

They watched the red car flash down the road and disappear. Trent, who was standing back somewhat from the rest of the group, said softly:

"Well, I guess I'll finish my cross-word puzzle now."

Moore looked at him, but said nothing. Instead he turned to Bob and said:

"Had a little excitement on your first visit to the station, didn't you? By jinks, I'd have sworn that fire was set!"

"So would I," Bob said quietly.

"But it wasn't. You can't go beyond the chief's findings. It was the insulation, all right. Funny, though, because Jack said he went over those wires lately. Well—we'll just have to inspect 'em all again, that's all."

"What about those two men we saw?" Harry asked. "If they hadn't done anything, what did they run for?"

"They did something, if they're the two Bob thought they were," Ned said grimly. "Didn't they beat up Frenchie?"

"Yeah, that's a fact," Harry admitted. "But

what in thunder were they doing around here?"

"Maybe planning something," Moore exclaimed.

"By jinks! I got a good mind to ask for police protection for this place!"

"You have a gun here, haven't you?" Bob asked.

"Gun? Sure, several of 'em. But I don't intend to stand off a gang of desperate bootleggers who try to fire my station."

"But I thought the fire was accidental?" Bob persisted.

"Well, what if it was? There's been too many funny things happening around here. Short time ago a man was beaten up, behind the station here. He's in the hospital now. This is a fine place, this is! Suppose it had been one of my men who was beaten up? They have police cars here with radios in 'em, they have special emergency signal lights, the cops have all sorts of new fangled devices—the next thing they'll be waving their hair and using powder puffs! And what good does it do? A man beaten up right in the Esplanade. Another behind my station. Huh! A swell police force!"

Bob looked at Captain Moore in amazement. He was a very strange man. One minute he would be jolly, happy-go-lucky, seeming not to have a care in the world. The next he'd be a volcano.

Apparently he realized this, for he uttered a half apology.

"My nerves are sort of shot," he muttered. "I got so much on my mind. You don't know—"

"We can guess," Bob said gently. "It's a tough racket. Say, captain, before that ladder is removed, I wonder if I might take a look at the place the fire started?"

"Sure, sure, go ahead! Help yourself. But you won't find anything. Toohey is pretty thorough."

"Thanks," Bob said. "Come on, fellows, let's see what's up there."

They walked to the side of the structure, and Bob climbed the ladder. Not much damage had been done by the fire—it had been discovered too quickly. He felt with his hand on the ledge for some minutes, then climbed down.

"Find anything?" Captain Moore asked, when they went around to the front.

"No, I just wanted to see what was what," Bob said vaguely. "Well, I guess we'll be going. And thanks a lot, captain. Would you mind if we came over some other time?"

"Not at all! Glad to have you any time! You didn't get a chance to see much of the radio room—but we're sort of upset now—"

"We understand. So long, captain."

"So long, fellows! Drop in again."

"We will."

They trudged toward the car. When they reached it, Harry asked:

"What was it you found, Bob?"

Bob looked at him keenly.

"How did you know I found anything?"

"You may have fooled the captain, but you didn't fool me," Harry chuckled. "You discovered something."

"Yes, I did," Bob said slowly. "And this is it."

He opened his hand. Within it was a blue stone, curiously carved.

"What's that?" Ned demanded.

"That," said Bob impressively, "is a scarab that was knocked out of a ring when the man that started that fire scraped off the insulation from the wire."

CHAPTER VIII

"WE'LL KEEP THAT DATE!"

THE minds of the three boys flashed back to the man with the ugly, bleeding cut in his lip, made, he said, by a scarab ring. And here, in Bob's hand, was a scarab stone evidently knocked, or torn, from a ring worn by someone who had climbed the ladder to the ledge on the Coast Guard station.

"I guess that settles it," Bob exclaimed.

"How do you mean?" Ned demanded.

"Well, we were right about the two men we saw running. They were the same who attacked the Canuck in the hotel."

"Looks like it," Harry admitted. "It's too bad we didn't see 'em a bit sooner."

"Or else run a bit faster," Ned suggested. "Say, Bob, are you going to tell Moore about the scarab?"

"No, I'm not," Bob said slowly. "I'll tell Luke Harper, but no one else. I don't know what good this will do us—maybe none at all. But at least it forms a link between what happened at the hotel and this Coast Guard station."

"Then you're sure the fire was set?"

"As sure as you can be about anything of this sort."

"Then why didn't that fire chief discover the scraped insulation?" Harry asked.

Bob shrugged his shoulders. "It wasn't so obvious. But I should have thought a trained eye could spot it."

They were in the car now, and Ned, in the driver's seat, started the motor. Bob reached across and inserted the radio key and turned the set on.

"Trying for some more short wave stuff?" Harry inquired.

"Might as well. Don't suppose we'll get any more of that 'one A. M. Tuesday off Lookout,' though," Bob said. "That was funny, wasn't it? I wanted to ask the radio operator at the station if he caught it, but I didn't have time. Anyhow, we'll see what's on now."

Heading again toward Bellemar, they rode along and listened to the splutterings of the radio. For some minutes nothing came in very clearly, then they picked up a coast weather bureau station. A storm warning was being broadcast.

"—all along the coast," the voice was saying. "Storm, probably of hurricane intensity, is moving northward from Florida. Center of storm now eighty miles southeast of Miami. Barometer falling. Reading at 10 A. M. twenty-nine point seven two. Hurricane warnings up from Fort Lauder-

dale to Key West. All craft are warned to seek safe anchorage."

"Good night!" Harry exclaimed. "A hurricane!"

"It may never get here, or it may go out to sea," Bob asserted. "This part of the country doesn't get such bad storms."

"I remember reading about one several years ago that ripped this place up plenty," Ned declared.

"You did? Well, I don't think they come very often."

"Hope not," Harry said. "I'd like to go fishing one of these days, soon."

The storm warning concluded, the station shut off, and the boys were not able to catch any more short wave transmission. They tuned in on a commercial station, and all the way home had a jazz orchestra playing for them.

At the hotel, Norcross stopped them as they were going by the desk.

"Say, fellows," he said mysteriously, "come in my office a second, will you please?"

He led the way, and Bob and the others followed. Once inside Norcross shut the door carefully.

"Since you have been in this thing from the start," he said impressively, "I thought I ought to

tell you this. I got a tip that there's a gang of counterfeiters working around here."

Bob never blinked an eye.

"You did?" he exclaimed. "What did you hear?"

"That Angy Peloti is concentrating on this territory. Ever hear of Peloti?"

Bob shook his head.

"Well, he's pretty well up in the underworld. He's a gang leader. And the man who told me about this knows him. The man told me something else, too."

"What?"

"That Peloti doesn't stand for any interference with his plans, and that a few persons who in the past have tried to mix with him are now in the hospital."

Bob fingered a paperweight that lay on the desk. When he spoke it was in a casual tone.

"Do you suppose," he asked, "that the man meant this for a warning?"

"A warning?" Norcross repeated. "To whom?"

Bob shrugged his shoulders. "It just sounded like one, that's all," and he laughed.

"I didn't look at it in that light," Norcross said slowly. "The man who gave me the tip—"

"Yes?" Bob said, for Norcross had stopped.

"I'm not at liberty to mention his name," the hotel manager went on quickly. "But he seemed to

have the straight dope. He told me that Peloti was a bad man to fool with."

"I don't think anyone will fool with him," Bob declared, and Harry, watching his face, thought he saw the tiniest twitch of an eyelid.

"You see, here's how it is," Norcross continued. "Peloti has charge of this territory, from Marston, fifty miles down the coast, right up to the Canadian border."

"Has charge of the territory?" Ned repeated. "What do you mean, Norcross?"

"I mean that if a man wants to open up any kind of a criminal joint—a speakeasy, or a gambling place—he goes to Peloti for permission. Then Peloti gets a cut out of it."

"Of course he hasn't anything to say about hotels," Bob said innocently.

"Hotels? Of course not. Why—"

"Just thought I'd mention it," Bob broke in. "You see we don't know much about these things. So Peloti is in with the counterfeitters, is he?"

"I think so," Norcross replied cautiously. "That's what I heard. But if I were you fellows, I wouldn't have anything to do with him. He's a pretty dangerous customer."

"Glad you told us," Bob declared. "We're down here for some fun, and not to get mixed up with any gangster. Did you hear any more, Mr. Norcross? Did your friend tell you anything else?"

"He's not a friend of mine— I just know him. No, that's all he said. Just that Peloti is a bad man to fool with."

"As I said before, we don't fool with anyone," Bob announced again. "Well, thanks a lot. We'll be going now."

"Right! How are you enjoying your stay?"

"Fine, thanks! See you later."

They left the office, and went up to their rooms. Once inside Bob stood with his back to the door and looked at Ned and Harry.

"Well?" he said softly. "What's your verdict?"

"Pretty plain, isn't it?" Ned asked. "This fellow Peloti is telling us to lay off."

"That's how I figured it," Harry agreed.

Bob nodded. "Suppose we ask Luke Harper to step up here, if he's around. No, wait a minute— don't put the call through from this room," as Ned started to pick up the phone. "I'll call from the hall phone."

He closed the door behind him, and was gone for five or six minutes. When he returned Harper was with him.

"Hello, fellows," the detective greeted them genially. "I hear old Norcross has been saying a few things."

"Do you know who Peloti is?" Harry asked him.

"Oh, sure! Everyone around here knows of

Peloti. Supposed to be a real big shot—one of these fellows who has delusions of grandeur, and takes this way of satisfying them."

"He's actually a gang leader, then?" Ned asked excitedly.

"Yep. He's pretty smart, too. We can't get anything on him. To tell you the truth, it's no news to me that he's in with the counterfeiters. He would be. But I'm not sure he's one of the leaders in that gang. As far as we can figure, the bunch that circulate the fake fives and tens are a large organization. They probably took Peloti in with them because of his power in this section. It won't do us any good to take Peloti in, even if we could find him. We haven't got any evidence to hold him on."

"What do you make of Norcross telling us, instead of you?" Bob demanded.

Harper shook his head. "That's hard to say. It may be that he really wants you to lay off, so you won't get hurt. I still don't think Norcross is actually in on this."

"Looks funny to me," Bob muttered. "If that wasn't a warning I never heard one."

"It might have been. Not going to let it scare you off, are you?"

"What do you think?" Bob laughed.

"I think not," and Luke grinned. "I knew what kind you fellows were when I first saw you up

here. Say, did you go over to the Coast Guard station?"

"I'll say we did," Harry said grimly. "And plenty happened."

"What?"

"Oh, a little fire, probably set by the two men who worked out on Frenchie," Bob answered carelessly.

"What?" Luke gasped.

They told him the story. When it was concluded, Bob held out the stone he had found at the station.

"Here's your scarab," he declared. "We might take it up and show it to Frenchie. See if he recognizes it. How is he, by the way?"

"He's all right. By gosh, fellows, this sure is interesting! In three days you uncovered more evidence than I have in a month. I'm sure glad I met you!"

"There's one other little thing," Bob said suddenly, "that we didn't mention. On the way over we were trying out our radio. We had it tuned to short wave reception. And we heard someone making a date for one A. M., Tuesday, off Lookout Point."

"A date?" Harper asked, puzzled.

"That's how we figured it. The voice repeated 'one A. M.—Tuesday—off Lookout.' Doesn't that sound like a date?"

"It certainly does," Harper exclaimed.

CHAPTER IX

AT SEA

IT WAS just dusk when Bob, Ned, Harry and Luke Harper got out of the radio-equipped car at Lookout Bay and walked across the sand toward the boathouse of Jim Gluts.

"This may be a wild goose chase," Luke remarked, "but I'm going to chance it. One A. M., Tuesday, off Lookout. Well, it's Monday. Now all we have to do is to wait until one A. M."

"You arranged for the boat?" Bob asked.

"Yep. Gluts said he'd have the *Sea Mew* ready for us, and all the bait and tackle. Naturally he thinks this is just a fishing expedition."

"What kind of a boat is the *Sea Mew*?" Harry wanted to know.

"Not bad. Forty foot. Good motor. Jim said he'd detail a couple of men to go with us, to run the thing."

"But won't they find out what we're after?" Ned demanded.

"Can't help it if they do. We'll be on our way by that time. If we fail, it's nothing lost."

"Say, there's that old fellow we saw the other

day," Harry remarked, pointing to a man sitting in a rowboat near the shore. "Let's stop a second and talk to him."

They went toward the fisherman, and when he saw them coming he waved. His boat was a fair-sized craft for a row boat, apparently adapted to ocean service as a life boat, if necessary, or off-shore fishing.

"How are they biting?" Harry called.

"Not so good, not so good! Bad night for fish. May get better later on."

"Where's your motor boat?" Bob asked him. "The one we saw you in the last time."

"Oh, that's gettin' fixed," the man replied vaguely. "Busted piston. Say, where you fellers bound for?"

"Fishing. We're going out in the *Sea Mew*."

"Are, hey? Well, I wish you luck. Whereabouts you goin'?"

"Just around," Harry replied, copying the fisherman's vague manner. "Thought we might as well have a crack at it, as long as we're here."

"Sure! Well, I'll row around here for a while, and then dock. Bad time for fish. Think it's comin' on to storm."

"You do?" Luke asked, and looked at the boys. "I thought fish bit well before a storm."

"Not these fish. But if I were you fellers, I

wouldn't go too far out in that there *Sea Mew*. She's staunch, but if we get a bad storm—"

"There was an announcement over the radio about a storm," Harry broke in. "We heard it."

"Doesn't look much like it now," Luke said, glancing at the fading colors of the day. "There was a beautiful sunset. My wife was up early, and she said the sunrise was flaming red."

"Red sun at morning, sailors take warning," the fisherman quoted. "But we may miss it."

"What have you got in the box under the seat—bait?" Bob asked, pointing.

"No, that's where I keep my fish—when, as and if," the man chuckled. "Well, I'll take a little row out and see if I have any luck before night. So long."

"So long," the others echoed, and walked toward Jim Gluts's boathouse. On the way Bob said:

"He seems like a nice old geezer. Guess he's been here a long time, don't you think?"

"Some of these people around here never move ten miles from where they were born," Luke commented. "Now, before we get to the boathouse, let's check up. Each of you boys got the guns I gave you?"

Automatically they felt in their pockets, and then nodded.

"We won't have any use for 'em, probably," Luke went on, "but it's best to be on the safe side."

If we do see anything, we'll have to use trickery to accomplish our purpose. Remember we're just fishermen, and haven't anything to do with John Law. All right, let's get over to Jim's."

Jim Gluts was rather a cantankerous old fellow, totally bald, the skin of his head tanned almost to the consistence of leather. He greeted the party with a grunt.

"Everything all set?" Luke asked cheerfully.

"Yep! Say, that your car out there?"

"Yes, it is," Bob answered.

"Well, I wouldn't leave it there. Likely to rain in the night. Let's have the key and I'll have it driven to the shed. Cost you a buck extry."

Bob looked at Luke, who nodded. "Jim is perfectly reliable," the detective said in a low voice.

"O. K.," Bob replied, handing over the keys. "That's a good idea. We can get it when we come in."

"The rain might spoil our radio," Harry suggested. "Best not to take a chance. You've got the radio key, haven't you, Bob?"

"Sure. I don't believe in letting garage men play it and wear out the batteries."

Jim handed the car keys to a helper, with directions to take the car up the road a ways to the "shed," wherever that was. Then he led them to the *Sea Mew*.

It was not a new boat, but it looked staunch and

seaworthy. There was a roomy cabin where four could sleep, at a pinch, and the after deck was perfect to fish from. Bob nodded with satisfaction when he saw it.

"How fast will she go?" he asked Jim.

"Make maybe sixteen knots. Got a good motor into her. I always keep the engine in good shape. She'll do all right for what you want her. This here is Ralph Hawkins, and Slag Parson. They'll go with you." The two men nodded. They were roughly dressed, but pleasant-faced. "You can start when ever you've a mind to. Everything is in the boat—food, water, tackle, bait and fuel. You figure on stayin' out tomorrow?"

"Not very late," Luke replied.

"Well, be back by evening, and it'll cost you an even fifty bucks. That fair?"

"Sure, that's fair enough," Bob answered.

"Right. Well, she's yours now. I'm goin' in to supper. See you when you get back. Don't get seasick."

"That's jolly," Harry laughed, as Jim strolled away.

"Oh, he's all right," Luke assured them. "Notice how he didn't insist on advance pay? He's a good scout. Let's get aboard."

Half an hour later they were moving out on the Bay, toward the ocean. Parson was sitting on deck smoking, while Hawkins steered.

"Ain't it a bit unusual to start out at night?" Parson said suddenly. "Most of 'em start at day-break."

"Well, we want to spend a night on the water—see what it's like," Luke explained.

"Uh-huh. Be all right, if the weather stays this way."

"Don't you think it will?" Harry asked.

Parson shrugged his shoulders. "Hard to say. I've lived here good many years. I ain't got it figured out yet. Queer place for weather. Never know what's goin' to happen. But I'll watch out, an' if it looks like a bad storm comin', we'll get back in plenty of time."

"Good," Luke remarked. "Say, I heard that blue fish were running pretty well right off Look-out Point, about ten miles. Suppose we head for there."

"Just as you say," Parson agreed, and called to his partner.

They were moving slowly, making not more than seven or eight knots. Bob asked Parson:

"Do you happen to know that old fisherman who was in a rowboat when we came to the boat-house?"

"You mean Tenpenny Johnson?"

"I don't know what his name is. He's got a cabin ship, too."

"Yeah, that's Tenpenny. But I don't think he

owns the cabin boat. He just got it a few months ago. I think he's runnin' it for someone else."

"He said it's laid up."

"Did, eh? I don't know. Don't pay much attention to him. He's been around here for years. Make's a livin' fishin', I guess. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. We were just talking to him, that's all. Seems like a nice old cuss."

"Oh, Tenpenny's all right."

They chugged along for a time, and Luke suggested they see what was in the larder. Parson got out some bread, meat, and gingerale, and they made a good meal. It was fairly dark now, and Parson asked if they wanted to see what they could catch.

"Though I don't go much for this night fishin'," he said. "More fun in daylight, when you can see what you're doin'."

"We'll wait a while," Luke answered. "Just cruise around. If you and Hawkins want to nap a while, I'll take the wheel. Then you can steer later."

"O. K., I could knock off a few winks. So could Hawkins. We were playin' cards last night. Ralph! Let the gentleman take the wheel. Have you steered before?"

"Oh, yes."

"O. K. Just keep a straight course out from Lookout Light. See it, back there?"

They looked at the flashing beam of the light-house on the point. By this time they were about ten miles out.

"Sure," Luke replied. "Cut down the speed a little. We'll stay right around here."

There was a gentle swell, which the *Sea Mew* rode splendidly. Above them glittered the countless stars.

"Doesn't look much like a storm," Ned commented. "Golly, it's great out here! I'm enjoying it."

"So am I," Harry agreed. "Even if we don't make out at your detective work. Bob, I'm glad we came."

Luke, at the wheel, was keeping a straight course out from the light. He glanced at the compass by the wheel, and saw they were going east-south-east.

"I'm going to swing about a bit," he declared. "I'll try to make a large circle, so we'll cover a lot of water. We can't very well get lost, with that light flashing back there."

Parson and Hawkins were below, sleeping. The *Sea Mew* was forging through the waves like a small ocean liner.

For several hours they chugged along, taking turns at the wheel. Finally Luke said:

"It's twelve-thirty. If anything's going to happen, it ought to happen soon. I'd like to put out

the lights, but it would be too dangerous. I suppose—”

He stopped, and put his hand to his ear.

“Get it?” he asked excitedly.

They listened. Above the steady sound of the motor they could hear the drone of an airplane, coming closer.

CHAPTER X

STORM

"It's a plane," Harry said, then realized that he was voicing the obvious. "Maybe that's the fellow who has the engagement!"

"He can't land on the sea at night," Bob declared. "He'd crack up sure. Couldn't tell where the surface was. This may be nothing at all but a fellow out for a ride—or it may be a Government plane, though what it's doing out here I can't imagine."

They listened again, and noticed that the drone was coming toward them from the shore. Evidently the plane was a large one, for the motor noise produced a deep, booming sound.

"Maybe it's a trans-Atlantic flier," Ned suggested.

"Not a chance," Bob said. "They don't come around here."

"Can you see the lights?" Harry asked.

They stared in the direction of the sound, but saw nothing. Then, suddenly, a flash of lightning streaked across the western sky.

"By jingoes, it is going to rain," Ned said in a low voice. "How far are we out?"

"About fifteen miles," Bob declared. "Say, will you go below and call Parson and Hawkins?"

Ned obeyed the suggestion. They came up, rubbing their eyes.

"What do you think of that?" Bob inquired of Parson, pointing toward the west, where the stars were obscured by clouds.

"Not much," Parson said shortly. "She's a-comin'."

"Tell you what I think," Hawkins said. "I think she'll be a rip-snorter. We better head for home."

"Hear that?" Parson said suddenly. "An airplane!"

"Blame fool," Hawkins commented.

"It's nearly one A. M.," Harry said to Bob, in a low voice.

"Then we better get going, you think?" Bob demanded.

"I think so," Parson said grimly. "Step her up, Ralph. I'll take the wheel. Sorry, fellows, your fishin' trip is off for tonight. I reckon Jim'll make it right with you."

"Sure he will," Luke agreed. "It's too bad, though. I was counting on catching some fish." He glanced again in the direction of the droning noise.

"I don't think the plane is coming any closer, Luke," Bob declared. "It seems to have turned."

"Yep," Luke said laconically.

The *Sea Mew* was pointed toward Lookout Light. The lightning was more vivid now. The storm was coming fast.

"Think we can beat it in?" Ned called to Parson.

"Just about," was the answer.

"Look!" Bob exclaimed suddenly.

He pointed to the west, and in a flash of lightning they saw the outlines of a large sea-plane. Then it was dark again, but as though the plane had caught something of the lightning's illumination, a white beam shot from the aircraft toward the earth.

"He switched his landing lights on!" Harry burst out.

"He's just about moving toward Lookout Bay," Parson said casually. "Maybe he's going to land on the Bay."

"Off Lookout," Bob mused aloud. "It could have meant the Bay. And here we are, almost ten miles away!"

Parson must have caught this last, for he inquired: "Was you expecting that plane? Did you know he was comin'?"

"No," Bob answered, laughing uneasily. "We

didn't know he was coming. Watch him—he's going lower—you can follow him by the lights!"

The plane was swooping down, and was revealed again in a flash of lightning. The wind carried the faint motor drone to those on the *Sea Mew*.

"He's going to land!" Ned exclaimed.

But he did not. The pilot zoomed down, then, when it seemed as though he were about to settle, the craft swooped up again, the lights were turned off, and the drone became fainter and fainter, until, finally, it was no longer heard. There came the distant mutter of thunder.

"That was a funny act," Luke Harper said to Bob. "Do you really think the pilot of that ship was the one who sent out that 'one A. M.' business? Did he have a date with someone?"

"If he did, he didn't keep it," Ned declared.

"How do you know?" Bob asked.

"Well, he didn't land, did he? Just swooping down low isn't going to get him any place."

"Maybe he didn't want to get any place," Bob said cryptically.

"Or maybe he really was supposed to meet someone on the Bay, and decided not to land because of the storm," Luke advanced.

"That sounds logical," Bob agreed. "And we're away out here, trying to—" He saw Parson looking at him queerly, and stopped. "Anyhow," he said loudly, "I guess we won't get any fish tonight."

"We'll try it again soon," Luke said.
"Whoops!"

The last remark was caused by a most vivid flash, followed by a peal of thunder. The wind was freshening, and the waves surging higher, causing the craft to rock.

"Will we make it?" Ned asked Parson.

"Guess so." The sailor was standing at the wheel, pipe in mouth. Hawkins was below, coaxing the motor to additional speed.

They were now but a few miles from the mouth of the Bay. But even as they saw it loom up ahead of them, the storm struck. And, as Hawkins had prophesied, it was a "rip-snorter."

The black clouds dipped toward the sea as if to swallow it up, and the wind tore across the expanse of water in tremendous gusts, causing the *Sea Mew* to heel dangerously. The next moment the rain dashed down in long streaks, and the tempest wrapped them in its furious arms.

Luckily all on the boat realized what they were in for, and had firm holds on the rail when the storm struck. Hawkins, in the cabin over the motor, was tossed against the side. He maintained his post, for it was all important to keep headway.

Parson clung to the wheel. They could see nothing but the flashes of the Lookout Light, and even this was at times obliterated by the violent sheets

of rain. The frequent lightning showed them the inlet a short distance ahead.

"I can't tell—if we're moving at all!" Parson yelled above the gale. "Seem like—we're goin' backwards!"

"We're moving!" Luke called back. "Stick to it! Need any help?"

"No—but better go see—how Hawkins is makin' out!"

Luke and Bob crept to the short companionway and went into the cabin. A single light burned, and in the rear, through the open door, they could see Hawkins in the engine room. His head was cut.

Bob and Harper made their way toward him.

"Want any help?" Bob yelled.

"Nope—only see if you can tie a cloth around my head—the blood gets in my eyes—can't see—"

Quickly Bob pulled out a clean handkerchief, and while Luke held him steady he tied it about the cut, which, while it was not deep, bled profusely.

"Smacked it against the shelf," Hawkins yelled, motioning toward a small shelf that held, in compartments, an oilcan and some rags. "Sure did come sudden, didn't she?"

"I'll say so," Luke agreed. "We'll soon be in now, I think. Motor running O. K.?"

"Yep, so far, but I don't want to leave her. If

anything happened, we'd be blown out to sea quicker than you could shave a pig."

Bob and Luke nodded, and went to note what headway they were making. The storm had not abated; in fact, it seemed to grow more fierce.

"We ain't makin'—the headway we should!" Parson called. "Golly, I'm soakin' wet! There's some slickers in the cabin. You fellows might as well get 'em on. I'm wet through now. That Bay can't be more'n a mile away—but we don't seem to be gettin' much closer!"

"Hawkins said the engine is running all right," Bob told him.

"Yeah. But this is a terrific wind. Whooie!"

A bolt appeared to shoot directly down in front of the bow. The thunder that followed was deafening.

"That wasn't fooling!" Ned shouted.

Harry went into the cabin to obtain the slickers. It seemed useless to get soaking wet when it could easily be avoided. He brought an armful of the yellow coats, and all put them on, even Parson, although he protested that he was so wet it didn't matter if he got wetter.

The *Sea Mew* was being tossed about like a chip, and the boys had to hang on to avoid being tossed overboard. But their craft rode the waves well, and few of them broke over the deck.

"Do you think the Coast Guard can see our lights?" Bob yelled to the helmsman.

"Don't know—they might! I got a couple of rockets back there—if worst comes to worst, we'll send 'em up! But I hate to do that—old man Gluts would be sore!"

"Wouldn't that be tough," Luke muttered. "Probably he's saving them for next Fourth of July!"

Bob was wondering about the plane they had seen, and whether the pilot had succeeded in getting away before the tempest broke. It did not seem possible that an aircraft could live in this storm, but it may have landed in some safe place. Yet it had looked like an ocean plane, and could, therefore, land only on water.

"If it got blown out to sea, it's lost," he mused aloud.

"Hey?" Luke inquired.

"I was thinking of the plane."

"Oh! If it's in this racket, the pilot is having no picnic. Say, isn't that the entrance to the Bay—right ahead? Look!"

At that moment Parson yelled "we're in!" and they could feel the lessening of the waves as they moved into the shelter of the Bay. They looked at the light, and saw it was toward their right.

"Boy, I'm glad we're out of that!" Parson

called. "That wasn't any fun, in case you don't know it!"

"We know it," Bob returned grimly. "Some difference between here and on the ocean, isn't there?"

The waves were choppy, but not nearly so large and powerful. The storm itself seemed to be abating. The thunder was more distant, and the lightning not nearly so frequent.

"Blowing itself out," Parson said.

Hawkins now came up, leaving the engine. His face was pale and he appeared weak.

"Any of you boys got a drink on you?" he asked.

"We'll be in shortly—you can get some ammonia at the Coast Guard station," Luke told him.

"Take it easy. Sit down."

He helped the man to the cabin.

"Certainly stuck to his job," Harry declared.

"He's got a nasty cut there."

They were nearly to the boathouse. Bob was leaning over the rail, when suddenly he turned and yelled:

"Hard port—quick! There's a man in the water!"

CHAPTER XI

THE EMPTY COT

THE craft swung around and at the same time Hawkins reduced speed. Luke rushed up with a boathook in his hand.

"Where is he?" Luke demanded.

"Let's have that—I can see him—" and Bob reached quickly into the water with the implement. The hook caught in the man's coat and Bob pulled him close. Then, with the assistance of Ned and Luke, he was lifted to the deck of the *Sea Mew*.

"Put on full speed—get to the boathouse as fast as you can!" Bob ordered. "There may be a chance to save this man—I don't think he's dead!"

"Who is he?" Harry asked.

"Can't see—he's not very heavy, I know that—some old fellow, I imagine."

Bob realized that it would be difficult to attempt artificial respiration on the shifting deck, so he waited until they landed. Then the unconscious man was carried quickly within the boathouse, where it was dry and fairly warm. Jim Gluts was waiting for them.

"So ya made it!! I was afraid—hey. what's that you got?"

"A man in the water—we pulled him out," Bob said quickly. "Got a phone here?"

"Yeah, sure—I'll call the doctor," and Jim moved fast. Then, for the first time, Bob, turning the rescued man's face toward the light, saw who it was they had taken from the water.

"Jiminy—it's the fisherman!" he exclaimed. "The one we saw in the rowboat!"

"We better start to work on him," Luke suggested. "Lay him flat on his face so the water will drain out. Let me try first—I've done this before."

The man was placed on the floor where Luke knelt over him and began his work of bringing him to consciousness. There was no telling how much water he had swallowed. Bob felt his pulse. It was quite weak.

Luke began to apply artificial respiration. There was little else that could be done, except to see that his tongue did not fall back into his throat, and Ned knelt beside Luke and grasped the tongue with a handkerchief wrapped around his fingers.

In a few minutes Jim returned.

"Nearest doctor is over at the hotel," he declared. "He's on his way here. How you makin' out?"

Luke did not answer him. He was panting

from his exertions. As yet the fisherman showed no signs of returning life.

Jim looked at him and started.

"It's old Tenpenny Johnson!" he exclaimed. "What the mischief was he doin' out on the bay in a storm like that?"

He bent over and gazed at the man.

"Old Tenpenny sure," he said again. "I hope we can save him."

"I'm—sure doing—all I can!" Luke gasped.

"Want me to take a turn?" Bob asked.

"No—not yet! I'll work a while—we'll have to keep this up until the doc gets here—"

Outside the rain was still beating down. Within the boathouse all that could be heard was the labored breathing of Luke Harper.

For fifteen minutes the detective continued his ministrations. Then he panted:

"Bob—you try it! Do just like I did—"

"I know," Bob said swiftly. "Let me get there."

He took Luke's place, and for a long time went on with the artificial respiration treatment. Suddenly the man on the floor gave a gasp, and began to breath. Then he moaned.

"He's coming around—keep it up!" Luke exclaimed.

Bob didn't bother to answer. Now was the critical time. He redoubled his efforts. A few minutes later the man moaned again.

"Run up to the Coast Guard station, somebody—" Luke began, when at that moment Hawkins burst into the room carrying a bottle.

"Ammonia," he said, holding it out. "I got it."

"Good!" Luke exclaimed. "Where's some water, Jim? I'll fix up a dose for him. How is he, Bob?"

"He's—coming—around," Bob panted.

The water had all drained from the lungs, and now Tenpenny was breathing—slowly, it was true, but still breathing.

"He may be just conscious enough to swallow this," Luke said. "Hold him up, Bob. Now—swallow, Tenpenny—swallow this! Swallow!"

The word must have reached the slowly reviving man for his throat made a convulsive movement and the aromatic spirits were swallowed. He shuddered.

"O. K.—he'll come out of it!" Luke declared. "Got anything to put around him, Jim? We've got to keep him warm!"

Gluts got a sweater and a coat, and after taking the wet clothes off the limp figure they wrapped him in these. Then Luke and Bob chafed his hands and arms.

"Here's the doc," Ned exclaimed, as the door opened.

"Hello, boys," the doctor said cheerfully. He was the same physician who had attended

"Frenchie" at the hotel. "So we meet again, do we? What a night! Now let's see. What have we here?"

He examined Tenpenny carefully, then nodded toward the group watching him.

"You saved his life," he said simply. "If you had waited until I got here he'd have died. I'll give him an injection of digitalis to strengthen his heart." He proceeded to prepare the drug, and in a few moments it went coursing into Tenpenny's blood. Almost immediately he opened his eyes and stared about him. His first words were:

"My boat—where's my boat at?"

"Boat?" asked Bob. "You mean your row-boat?"

"My boat! My boat with—where is it—" He sought to rise, but the doctor pressed him back.

"Take it easy," he said soothingly. "You're lucky to be alive. These people pulled you out, then gave you artificial respiration. You owe your life to them."

The eyes darted quickly from one to the other, coming to rest on Bob. Tenpenny put a trembling hand to his mouth.

"My boat—" he said weakly. "My—"

"Don't worry about that," Bob said quickly. "Were you out in that small boat during the storm?"

Tenpenny nodded. "It tipped over—I couldn't make shore—"

"Never mind, you're all right now," the doctor said. "You just stay here for a while—in fact it would be better if you could stay all night. I guess we can fix up some kind of a bed for you on a bench. I want you kept as warm as possible. I don't like to have you brought out in this rain."

"We can take care of him here," Gluts said. "I've got a cot in that room. Plenty of covers on it, too."

"Fine! We'll just lift you in there," and the doctor bent over Tenpenny. "Will you help me, please?" he asked the others.

Bob and Luke went to his assistance. Suddenly the old man stiffened.

"No—no!" he yelled wildly. "I've got to get out—I can't stay here—I've got to get out, I tell you—"

"Now, now," the doctor soothed. "You don't have to do anything. You're going right back there and go to sleep. I'll mix you something that'll put you to sleep. And in the morning you'll be fine."

"I don't want to sleep—there's something I've got to do—"

"Never mind it now," the physician said sharply. "Come on, let's carry him in."

Tenpenny gazed at Bob, and if ever there was

appeal in a man's glance it was in his. But he said no more. They carried him into the small room and laid him on the cot.

"Now, I'll fix something quieting for you to drink," the doctor said, and went out to where he left his kit. Again Tenpenny stared at Bob and his lips moved as though he was about to speak, but no sound came.

"What is it?" Bob asked gently. "You can tell me. I'm your friend. What is it?"

But the old man shook his head, then turned to the wall.

"Better let him alone," Luke advised.

Bob looked at the slight figure, then nodded. He and Luke went softly from the room.

After the doctor had administered the sleeping draught, he gave orders that in the morning Tenpenny should be given some hot milk, and then, later, thick soup.

"I'll stop back about noon," he promised. "Be sure to keep him warm. He's no kid, you know, and he hasn't got a world of vitality. I'm surprised that he came around as well as he did."

It was now nearly 3 o'clock. Harry asked Bob:

"Well, what do we do now? Go back to the hotel?"

"You can come up to my place, if you want," Gluts said. "I've got some extra beds. Hawkins can

stay here and take care of Tenpenny. I guess he'll sleep 'til morning."

"Can you figure out what he was doing out in all that storm?" Bob asked Luke. "Could he have been fishing?"

"Could have," the detective admitted. "Sounds crazy, but he might have thought to beat the storm to shore."

"We can ask him about the airplane," Ned suggested. "Maybe he saw what kind it was, and where it went."

"Maybe," said Bob. "We'll ask him, anyhow, in the morning. Now about the rest of the night. I'm in favor of taking advantage of Mr. Gluts's offer, and staying here."

"Me too," Harry said, and Ned also agreed.

"I guess I can manage it all right," Luke said. "My wife doesn't expect me home, anyhow. But I guess I'll just give her a ring so she won't worry. That was quite a bad storm."

"It's still raining," Ned declared.

"Yes, but the wind has pretty well died down. I'm going to call my wife."

The rest waited while he telephoned.

"Now I'm all set," the detective stated. "Mary was glad I called. She was a little worried. How far is your place, Jim?"

"Just down the road a piece. You all got the slickers out of the cabin, I see. Well, keep 'em on.

By the way, of course, I won't charge you full price for that boat. Reckon ten bucks will about cover it. Hawkins, your head all right?"

"Sure," Hawkins replied.

"Should have had the doc look at it while he was here. Well, we might as well be on our way. You and Parson goin' to stay here, Hawkins?"

"Yep."

"Guess I'll have a look at Tenpenny, just to see if he's O. K.," Bob asserted. "Be right back."

He entered the small room. In a moment he was back again, his face slightly pale.

"Come here, quick," he said tensely.

The others filed into the room.

Tenpenny's bed was empty. An open window was mute testimony of the method he had used to leave. The rain blew in upon the vacant bed as the boys stared at it.

CHAPTER XII

FRENCHIE

IT WAS not pleasant to think of that old man, only partially recovered from his fight with death, wandering about in the cold rain. Certainly only some intense emotion could have driven him to seek a way out through that window.

"He must have been delirious," Luke gasped. "Poor old geezer! We should have watched him. Come on, we've got to find him before something happens."

"I don't think he was out of his head," Bob said slowly. In his mind was a picture of those pleading eyes.

"But what in thunder would he want to leave here for?" Harry asked wonderingly. "He was safe enough."

"I don't know," Bob admitted. "But I'm pretty certain he knew what he was doing."

"What makes you say that?" Luke demanded.

"Just a hunch."

"Well, we've got to search for him anyhow," Ned declared. "We can't just let him go like that."

"Right," Luke said decidedly.

"But where will we look?" Harry demanded.

"Down by the Bay," Bob replied.

Luke glanced at him curiously. "What makes you think he'd head for the water?" he inquired.

"Well—I don't exactly know," Bob said evasively. "We might as well look there as any place. Tell you what, Luke, you and I can go down by the Bay, and Harry and Ned can go to Tenpenny's house. It's just possible that he went there."

"O. K.," Harry agreed. "Let's go, Ned."

They hurried out of the boathouse, clothed in the slickers, and followed by Bob and Luke. The rain was now little more than a drizzle. The wind had died down, and the weather gave promise of a clear morning.

As Bob and Luke walked through the darkness along the shore of the Bay, their eyes searched the expanse of water for a glimmer of light. But they could see nothing.

"What would he be doing out here?" Luke demanded.

Bob shrugged his shoulders. "It may have been a wrong hunch. We'll look for a while longer, anyhow."

They continued their tramp through the rain, until an hour passed. Then they went back to the boathouse.

Ned and Harry hadn't returned yet. This was

strange, for they had gone simply to Tenpenny's house, which was not a great distance away.

"Heard anything at all?" Bob asked Jim Gluts.

Jim shook his head. "Haven't even heard from your two friends. Maybe they—"

He was interrupted by the appearance of the two subjects of conversation. Both seemed a bit excited.

"Tenpenny's home," Ned exclaimed.

"Just came in," Harry added.

"Where was he?" Luke demanded eagerly.

"That's the funny part of it," Harry answered slowly. "We couldn't find out. He came in the back door—sort of sneaked in. We were sitting in the front talking to his wife. She was awful nervous—we thought she'd throw a fit or something if we left too soon, so we were staying trying to get her calmed down. We were talking, and we heard a noise in the rear. It was Tenpenny. He was all in. He flopped down on the couch and Ned and I thought he was going to pass out again."

"His wife had a little medicine—we gave him that," Ned said. "It helped bring him around. Then we asked him where he had been and why he ducked out like that. We told him he was likely to get pneumonia and die. But all he'd do was to shake his head. We couldn't get a thing out of him."

"Did he seem out of his head at all?" Bob inquired.

"No, he didn't. Just awful tired, and sort of sick."

"Poor chap," Luke said softly. "Jim, you better tell the doc to be sure and stop over to see him in the morning."

"I will," Jim promised. "Now let's get over to my place. I'm plenty tired myself. We'll heat some coffee and then hit the hay."

The three chums and Luke Harper slept well on the cots Jim assigned to them, and did not awaken until after 10 o'clock. The morning was fine and clear. They hurried with their dressing, and had breakfast with Jim and his wife. Then they returned to the boathouse, which was on the way to the shed where the boys' auto was stored.

"Don't feel like fishin' today, do you?" Jim asked.

"Hardly think so," Bob replied. "But we want to pay you for last night, including your hospitality."

"Huh?"

"I mean for our board."

"Oh, that! I should say not! I asked you to stay. No charge for that. And I reckon ten dollars will straighten us out for the boat."

Bob handed him a ten dollar bill, and Jim looked at it quizzically, squinting his eyes. Then he grinned.

"We get a lot of phony tens around here," he

said. "I just wanted to be sure about this one. I mean you might not know it was bad yourself. They say those counterfeiters are pretty clever."

"So they have counterfeiters around here?" Luke asked innocently.

"Sure—ain't you heard? I thought everybody knew. There's a gang they say has been operatin' between here and Canada. A big gang. They got the police nearly crazy. Can't get head or tail of 'em."

"Then how do they know—" Bob began.

"Oh, they found a bunch of the 'phonies' some place—don't know just where. They think they bring the fake money in here for distribution—you know, to peddle it out, shove it off."

"That's interesting," Luke declared. "You say everyone around here knows about it?"

"Sure, most people. But they don't do nothin' about it."

"Why not?"

"Ever hear of Angy Peloti?"

"No."

"Well, he's a big shot in this county. And he don't like interference. He's got this place buffaloed."

"What's he got to do with the counterfeiters?"

"No one knows, for sure. But you can't help seein' which way the wind's blowin'."

Luke scratched his head. "Seems like I've heard of that fellow Peloti," he muttered.

"You're the dick over to the Esplanade, ain't you?" Jim asked.

"Yes."

"Then you ought to know who Peloti is."

"I do, sort of. But you see I don't bother much with that stuff. My job mostly is seeing that guests behave, and that pickpockets don't get in the hotel, and things like that."

"Sure, I know," Jim said. "Well, if you ever see Peloti, steer clear of him. He's a bad egg."

"What's he look like?"

"Short, and stocky. Wears a cap most of the time. Smokes a pipe. They say he's got one of the greatest collection of pipes in the country. All sorts—from all over the world."

"Hum! Well, thanks for the tip. Come on, boys, we'd better be getting back. I'll have to report to my boss. And thanks a lot, Jim, for all you've done. It was swell."

"Nothin' at all," the boatman said, waving his hand. "Sorry you had such bad weather. Better luck next time."

"Hope so," Bob murmured.

They got the car out of the shed and soon were driving toward the hotel. They tried the radio, and it worked perfectly.

"That's a neat contraption all right," Luke said

admiringly. "Music while you ride. Let's see how the short wave business works."

Bob switched it on. They waited, and after trying several points they heard faintly:

"Hello Pete! Hello Pete! Got you clear that last time. Trying out a new variable condenser. Works fine. Where were you in that storm last night? Knocked my set haywire for a while. Heard an airplane over the house just before she struck. Heard the same thing before—I mean the plane. At night. Asked the Coast Guard who it was—they didn't know. Some crazy fool, I guess. But maybe testing night flying apparatus. Month ago I got signals I thought were from the plane. Couldn't make out the words—he wasn't using code, either. My house is back from the Bay, you know. When are you coming over here? Want to show you something. O. K., Pete! Signing off. O. K. Pete! Go ahead."

The voice stopped. They couldn't catch the reply.

"Must be an amateur some place," Harry suggested. "So he heard the plane, too."

"That's right interesting," Luke drawled. "So he asked the Coast Guard about the plane, did he? I wonder—"

He cut his words short, for the voice continued:

"Hello Pete! Hello Pete! Sure, that's fine. Next Thursday. Haven't seen Mabel in two weeks. What are you so het up about? Maybe she's been

away. If I see her I'll tell her. Maybe you'll see her when you come over Thursday. We can take in a movie. Bring that new book on radio you got. Perhaps you can get Mabel interested in radio, if she's not interested in you. Don't get me wrong, kid. Just fooling. She likes you all right. In fact she's crazy about you. Last time I saw her, she asked me where that good-looking friend of mine was. She said you reminded her of someone. I asked her who and she said Bull Montana. O. K., Pete, go ahead!"

The voice stopped again, and Bob and the others laughed.

"Sure is giving that guy a ride," Ned chuckled.

"You know," Bob mused aloud, "I'll bet we could find out where that station is, easily. We could ask the Coast Guard—Captain Moore probably would know."

"What good would that do?" Harry asked.

"Well, maybe none. But he said something about signals from the plane. I'd like to find out about that."

"So would I," Luke said grimly.

Although they kept the radio tuned to the station they had been receiving, they heard nothing more. Arriving at the hotel the car was put up in the garage, and the next few days Bob and the others "took things easy." They swam and lolled on the beach. But Saturday morning Luke called Bob on

the telephone and said he had something important to tell him. They met at Luke's house.

"Come on in," Luke suggested. "Swell day, isn't it?"

Bob could see he was excited. "What happened?" the youth asked.

"Well, I'll tell you. They put over another one on us. A new batch of counterfeit money is afloat. The hotel here got three fake tens, and the bank reported others. All new bills. Bob, we've got to do something about this. I hate to fall down on the job. And there's another thing. They sprang Frenchie. You know, Blanche, the guy they tried to torture in the hotel. Last night he escaped. They were holding him for further questioning. What good are all their radio cars if they can't even keep a man in jail?"

CHAPTER XIII

THE RADIO AMATEUR

FRENCHIE's escape from jail was being hushed up by the police, for it reflected little credit upon them. The Canuck had gotten out, not by any dramatic sawing of bars, but simply by walking out. A friend had called to see him. The turnkey opened the cell to admit the man, and as he had done so a scream came from another part of the corridor. The turnkey rushed over, leaving the cell door open, and Frenchie walked out of the building, got in a car, and was driven away. As simple as all that.

The Chief of Police, William Oliver, told Luke about it in a dispirited voice.

"It wasn't my fault," he grumbled. "The turnkey was a new man. Anyhow, we really didn't have anything on Frenchie."

"No, not much," Luke said meaningly.

"Well, we didn't! We were just holding him for questioning. And he wouldn't talk."

"That's right. O. K., Bill! But if you get track of him, I think it would be a good thing to pick him up again."

"Are you trying to kid me? Of course we'll pick him up, if we can find him! Think I'm going to let a prisoner walk out on me like that?"

"Maybe he was tired of jail, and wanted some exercise."

"Exercise! Exercise!" And Oliver rang off, disgustedly.

But the floating of this new counterfeit money was serious. No one could tell how much of it had been released. It would not be practical to broadcast a warning to the general public, telling people to look with suspicion on all five and ten dollar bills. The banks would be swamped with panic-stricken depositors.

There was nothing that could be done about it. And Monday morning Bob announced:

"I'm going to try to find that radio amateur we heard on the car set. We'll go over to the Coast Guard station and see if Captain Moore can identify him. What do you say?"

"Jake with me," Ned declared, and was echoed by Harry. An hour or so later they were talking to Captain Moore.

"Sure, I remember that fellow," the Coast Guard head said. "I think his name is Curtis Osborne. Now let's see. He lives back of the Bay some place—Jack! Jack Benchly!"

The radio man, who was in the next room reading, responded:

"Yeah, captain? Want me?" He walked to the door.

"Remember that radio fellow who came over here inquiring about the airplane?"

"Sure, I remember him! He's got a small set. Name is Osborne."

"That's the fellow. Where's his place?"

"On Lincoln Road. Take the road around the Bay, and Lincoln Road is about six miles from here. Follow that right out to where a fire alarm hangs at the cross-roads. You know, one of those circular iron things. His house is the first one on the right beyond that."

"Thanks."

Jack returned to resume his reading. Captain Moore looked at Bob.

"That answer your question?"

"Sure does! Much obliged. Guess we'll take a run out there."

"Why? What's up?"

"Oh, nothing in particular," Bob replied evasively. "Just thought we'd like to look over the station. Thanks a lot."

"Welcome. Drop in again."

On the way out they saw Trent, the tall member of the Coast Guard.

"Still detecting?" he asked, grinning.

"No," Ned answered promptly. "We've taken

up cross-word puzzles, so we can learn how to be a Coast Guard."

Trent's face grew red, and he turned on his heels.

"Good crack, that," Bob laughed, when they were walking toward their car. "Got him right between the eyes."

"He's too much of a wise guy," Harry declared. "I don't like him."

"So don't I," Bob agreed.

By following Jack Benchly's directions, they found Osborne's house easily. Luckily he was at home, and he greeted them politely. Osborne was a tall fellow with glasses, about thirty-five, Bob guessed.

"Sorry to disturb you," Bob said, "but we happened to hear a broadcast of yours the other day, and we were interested."

"You're not disturbing me at all! Come right in! So you heard me shooting off my mouth?"

"I wouldn't call it that," Ned said, smiling. "You were taking someone named Pete for a little ride about Mabel."

"Oh, Pete Gary! Yeah! I was kidding him about a girl he likes. So you heard that!"

"We heard it on our car radio," Bob told him. "But there was something else we were more interested in."

They were in the Osborne parlor now. On a

center table were spread some radio gadgets. Osborne motioned Bob and the others to take seats.

"What was that?" he inquired, his eyes gleaming behind his spectacles.

"Why, about the airplane you heard," Bob replied bluntly.

"The airplane!" Osborne glanced from one to the other. "Say, you fellows aren't from the police, are you?"

"No, we're not," Bob laughed. "We're just curious, that's all. We got interested in radio, and we want to learn all we can about it. That's all."

"Oh! Well, I'll tell you about that. It was sort of funny. It was on a Saturday night, about a month ago, I think. No, a Friday night, because we had fish. I was fooling around the set, about twelve or one o'clock. All of a sudden I heard a voice mumbling something. I couldn't quite make out what it was, except for a few words. Bad reception that night."

"What were the words?" Harry asked eagerly.

"One of them was 'look out.' Another was 'Tuesday.' Then 'look out' was repeated again. I figured maybe he was warning someone. That's why I thought it was rather queer."

"Warning someone," Bob mused. "Yes, maybe he was."

"But we thought—" Ned began impetuously, when with a glance Bob stopped him.

"Is that all you heard?" Bob asked.

"That's about all."

"And you think it was from the airplane?"

"Well, I thought so at the time, because I heard the plane a little later, and the signals sounded as if they were coming from some place where there was a lot of interference. You know, there was that funny, crackling noise, and the voice was thin. Almost like a re-broadcast. You can usually tell those."

"And this was at night."

"Yep. 'Bout one o'clock, I should say."

"You didn't see the plane?"

"No, I didn't. Just heard it."

Bob thought for a moment. Then, evidently deciding to abandon this line of questions for a time, he asked:

"I wonder if we could see your set? Would it be too much trouble? We don't want to butt in—"

"Butt in? Don't be silly. I'll be glad to show it to you!" Osborne's eyes were shining with the enthusiasm of a man who is on his favorite topic. "Come on upstairs. I'll show you the whole works."

He led them to a room which contained his sending and receiving set. It was a small room, but in perfect order.

"You know we amateurs have to have licenses from the Government," he explained. "We have a call number and everything. This is station W3PG.

It operates on 6,990 kilocycles, which is really outside the regular eighty meter channel. Had to use pull to get it," he said proudly. "What do you think of the set?"

Bob wished at that moment that he knew more about radio so that he could talk intelligently about it. The best he could do was:

"It sure looks compact."

"It is, too. See, I use the master-oscillator-power-amplifier circuit, with a crystal controlled .10 feeding a .10 intermediate amplifier working into a .03A final amplifier."

"Yes, I see," Bob said, a trifle dazed. The technical terms were coming too fast and hot for him. "Er—what sort of an antenna do you use?"

"A sixty-six feet voltage fed Hertz."

"Uh-huh." Bob turned to Harry and Ned. "You see, fellows—what did I tell you? He uses a sixty-six foot voltage fed—er—er—"

A sudden burst of laughter came from Osborne. He clapped Bob on the back.

"Stop stalling, my friend," he chuckled. "You haven't the slightest idea what I was talking about, have you?"

Bob grinned, relieved. "Well, to tell the truth, we haven't," he confessed. "I'll tell you the whole story. First we'd better introduce ourselves," and he told Osborne their names. "We're working with a Federal man to try to round up a gang of coun-

terfeitters who are at work in this section." He paused, to see how Osborne took this announcement. The radio enthusiast's eyes sparkled.

"You are?" he asked eagerly. "That's great! I heard about those fellows. In fact mother—I live with my mother here, just us two—she got stuck with five fake tens. We haven't got so very much money, and fifty dollars is quite a lot to us."

"It is to anybody, these days," Ned muttered.

"Then you are from the police?" Osborne insisted.

Bob shook his head. "No, we're not. We have no connection with the police. We came down here for a little vacation, and one evening, in the room next to ours at the Esplanade—" and he told of the episode, and the subsequent events.

When he concluded, Osborne whistled. "Sure sounds like a lot of trouble brewing," he said. "But why are you telling me all this? Aren't you afraid I might be in with the counterfeiters?"

"Not a chance," Bob laughed. "Not with that face. But I'll tell you why I wanted you to know the whole story. I think you can help us."

"How?"

"With this radio set."

Osborne glanced at the youth in a puzzled manner. "I don't exactly get it," he remarked.

"I think," Bob said impressively, "that there is a direct connection between the signals you heard,

which you thought were from a plane, and the counterfeiters. I'm convinced that the gang is using radio in their operations—not only using it, but depending a great deal on it. If you can help us locate their radio station, or to intercept their signals, you'll be doing a great deal toward capturing the counterfeiters. Will you do it?"

"Sure I'll do it," Osborne said forcibly. "Anything I can do to—"

"Curtis!"

It was his mother's voice, from downstairs.

"Yes, mother?"

"There's a man here who wants to see you. He says his name is Peloti. Will you come down for a moment, please?"

CHAPTER XIV

"THREE HUNDRED A WEEK"

AT THE mention of the name, Bob started and glanced quickly at Osborne. But the name evidently meant nothing to him.

"Right down, mother," Osborne replied, and turned to Bob. "You fellows will have to excuse me a few minutes," he apologized. "I'll be back as fast as I can," and he started for the door.

"Wait!" Bob exclaimed. "Wait a moment—don't go down yet!"

Osborne looked at him in amazement. "Why, what's up?" he asked.

Bob came close to him.

"That man—Peloti," he said in a low voice, "is supposed to be one of the counterfeitters!"

"You don't say!" Osborne ejaculated. "Let's call up the police right away, and we can—"

"No!" Bob grasped his arm. "Don't you see, here may be our chance? Peloti doesn't know we're here—at least I don't think he does. You can tell him the car in front is yours. Now, you go down, and make believe you never heard of Peloti before. Take in everything he says, and play dumb—awful

dumb. We'll be listening from the stairs. No matter what he asks you, don't say yes or no. Stall! Get it? Stall—and tell him you'll give him an answer later. Understand?"

Osborne, for all his unworldly appearance, was really very clever and quick to absorb the unexpected. He nodded.

"I understand," he declared. "I'll bring him in the parlor. You fellows can hide on the stairs and hear what we say. When he gets ready to go, I'll blow my nose hard. That's the signal for you to get out of sight."

"Fine," Bob approved. "Go ahead."

Fixing his tie, Curtis Osborne walked nonchalantly down the stairs and into the hall. The boys heard him greet his caller and bring him into the parlor. Then they crept to the top of the stairs, from which point they could hear every word plainly.

"Nice little place you got here," Peloti was saying. "Guess you farm, mostly, hey?"

"Yes, that's it," Curtis replied easily. "We raise corn and beans and melons and things like that. Not very profitable, but we manage to make a living."

"Nothing is making much money these days," said Peloti. "Everything is tough. Plenty tough! Say, is that a radio aerial I see out there?"

"Yes. I have a small set upstairs."

"Have, eh? Just a receiving set?"

"No, I fool around with transmitting too."

"Oh, you do!" There appeared to be satisfaction registered in the tones. "Sending, hey? Got an amateur's license, I suppose?"

"Yes. Are you from the Radio Commission? If you are, I can show you my license—"

"Clever bit, that," Bob whispered to Ned. "Throw Peloti right off his guard."

"No, no, I'm not from the Radio Commission," Peloti was saying. "Just thought I'd ask, that was all." He paused, and when he continued he changed the subject entirely.

"How's business, these days?" he demanded.

"Not very good. Just about make both ends meet."

"Hum. How much you take in a week—average?"

"Why, I can't say for certain," and those listening on the stairs could hear the simulated surprise in Osborne's voice. "Why do you ask?"

"Just curious, that's all. Do you make fifty bucks a week?"

Osborne laughed. "I should say not! Half that would be nearer right. Sometimes, on a good week, we take in thirty-five."

"Hum. That's not so much." He paused again, and Bob could visualize him leaning toward Os-

borne. "How would you like to make a hundred bucks a week—two hundred?"

Osborne chuckled. "Why, I'd like it fine! Who wouldn't?"

"Sure, who wouldn't?" and Peloti's laugh rasped out. "Who wouldn't? Only a crazy man wouldn't! Well, I can tell you how to make two hundred bucks a week—and without doing anything more than lift a finger."

"Lift a finger?"

"Yep! Lift a finger, and throw a switch, and talk a few minutes into your microphone. Or maybe tap out a few signals in code. Easy, hey?"

"Sure it's easy," Osborne agreed. "What's the idea?"

"Oh, nothing much," Peloti said expansively. "You see I got some friends who are radio bugs. They are trying out a new outfit. Some kind of a condenser or something—I don't know, I'm not much of a radio fan. But they got to get someone to help 'em test their device. Get it?"

"Yes," Osborne said, "but why pay two hundred dollars for that? You could get it done for less."

"My friends are rich," Peloti explained. "They want good service and they'll pay for it. Well, what do you say?"

"I don't know what to say," Osborne replied. "What, exactly, is it you want me to do?"

"Just this. When I come to you with a message

I want you to send it, just as you get it, and no questions asked. My friends are peculiar that way. And between certain hours I want you to be at your set and have it tuned to a certain wave length that I'll tell you. Anything you hear between those hours you write down and when I come you give the messages to me—and to no one else but me. For this, you get two hundred smackers a week."

He stopped. Osborne cleared his throat.

"That's a lot of money," he said.

"Sure it's a lot of money. And we want a lot of service for it. Mainly closed mouth service."

"Closed mouth service?"

"Yep. Nothing said to nobody. Listen, buddy, I'm going to come clean with you. You don't look like a dummy. Why do you think I want you to do this—why am I willing to pay two hundred bucks a week?"

Osborne did not answer immediately. He was thinking. When he did reply, his words came softly:

"Are you bootleggers?"

Peloti slapped his knee. "You got it," he exclaimed. "I knew it wasn't any use fooling around with you. You never heard of me, hey—Angy Peloti?"

"No, I can't say that I have."

"Well, you're the only guy around this section of the state that hasn't. I rule this roost. Get it?"

What I say goes. You don't have to worry if you come in with us. And you won't have to do a thing except sit at your little radio and have fun. By golly, I'll make it three hundred bucks a week! That's what I think of you!"

"Three hundred dollars a week!"

"Sure! Three hundred little iron men every week! And perfect protection—I'll guarantee that. Well—what do you say?"

"Gee—I don't exactly know—"

"Take your time. I don't want to rush you. But just one more thing. I want you to promise me that you won't repeat a word of this conversation to anyone—not one word, understand?"

The last tone was menacing. Osborne replied quickly:

"I wouldn't tell anyone, even if I didn't come in with you. Don't worry about that. I swear I won't tell a soul."

"Good. I'm glad of that," said Peloti simply, but there appeared to be a meaning behind the words which the tone itself did not convey. "By the way, the lady who let me in—your mother?"

"Yes."

"Anyone else live with you?"

"No. Just the two of us."

"I see. That's fine. Well, I'll tell you. I'll stop back this way tomorrow. You can let me know your answer then. Don't get me wrong, Osborne—you

can do this with perfect safety. And with three hundred bucks a week—you could do a lot of things.”

“I sure could.”

“Yes. Well, I’ll be going. See you tomorrow. So long!”

“Good-bye!”

Osborne blew his nose as Peloti arose. When the man went into the hall the stairs were clear. Bob and the others were in a room upstairs, from where they saw Peloti get into a long, low roadster, entirely black. There was scarcely a sound as he started it and moved smoothly down the road.

Then Bob, followed by Ned and Harry, descended the stairs. They found Osborne staring out the front door.

“What do you think of that?” he said, and faced them.

At that moment Mrs. Osborne came into the room. She was small and rather thin, and on her face was a worried look.

“Who was that man, son?” she asked.

“Oh—just someone who wanted to know about the radio,” Curtis replied casually. “Mother, I want you to meet some friends of mine. This is Bob Dexter, Harry Pierce and Ned Fuller.”

She acknowledged the introductions with a smile, but the worried look did not entirely leave her countenance.

"What did that—Mr. Peloti—want?" she inquired.

"Nothing much. Just some information. Never mind about him," and Curtis kissed her tenderly. "Mother, I wonder if there isn't some lemonade and cakes in the kitchen?"

"Why, of course—I'll make some immediately!" and she bustled off, eager to be of service.

The four reentered the parlor. Bob was the first to speak.

"Peloti sure does things up brown," he declared. "Three hundred dollars a week!"

Osborne nodded. "He's no piker. It surprised me that he admitted being a bootlegger."

"That was a good idea on your part," Ned said admiringly. "It certainly fooled Peloti."

"I wonder," Osborne mused, "if he isn't just what he admitted being—a bootlegger. You're sure he's mixed up in the counterfeiting racket?"

"Pretty sure," Bob asserted. "I'm not the only one who thinks so, either. Now if you'll excuse me a moment, I'll talk to Mrs. Osborne. I think she's worried. I just want to reassure her."

He left the room. And as though his going was a signal, a voice at the door said:

"I beg your pardon. You were talking about me?"

It was Peloti. They stared at him in astonishment. He had come in quietly, noiselessly.

"Why—why—" Osborne stuttered.

"I forgot my pipe. It is a very valuable one, to me." He picked it up from a center table. "I will go now."

At the door he turned.

"I'll be back tomorrow, Osborne, as I promised. I always keep my promises. I like others to do the same. If they don't—they usually wish they had."

And he was gone. At that moment Bob reentered. There was no need to tell him what had happened. What he missed hearing the faces of the others told him.

CHAPTER XV

EMERGENCY CALL

OSBORNE tried to laugh, but it stuck in his throat. The short, squat figure which had just quitted the room was not one to inspire merriment. There was something sinister about it. The words Peloti uttered struck home to those standing in the parlor: "I always keep my promises. I like others to do the same. If they don't—they wish they had."

It was obvious to what he was referring. Osborne had sworn not to tell anyone of their conversation. When Peloti entered, it appeared that he had broken his word and had informed Bob and the others what had taken place. Of course, this was not so—for Bob had heard the whole thing himself. But Peloti didn't know this, nor would it be of much avail to tell him.

"It looks," Osborne said, attempting to assume a jovial tone, "as if I had put my foot in it."

"Don't let that fellow worry you," Bob said quickly. "That's how he works—by making other people afraid of him. He may be a big man with his own gang, but to me he's just a big tomato."

"You don't think he'll do anything, then?" Osborne asked rather anxiously, glancing back toward the kitchen, where his mother was.

"No. Now we'll have to figure this thing out. He said he'll be back tomorrow—if he does, you'll have to be ready for him. There's one chance that you can convince him everything is all right—but you'll have to be a pretty good actor to do it."

"How?"

"This way. When he comes tomorrow, you pretend to be all excited. Make believe you've been trying to get in touch with him. He'll be cynical, of course, but you keep right on talking, as fast as you can. Tell him he got the wrong idea of what happened today. Tell him that we're friends of yours, and that we were upstairs fooling around your radio, and we heard that part about the three hundred dollars a week. Then we listened to the rest of it, and when we thought he had gone we came rushing down. Tell him that you didn't say anything to us—we heard it ourselves. And now comes the important part."

Bob paused, and looked keenly at Osborne.

"Then tell him," he continued, "that we have radio sets too, and ask him if he wants to hire us!"

Osborne opened his eyes wide. "But I don't see—"

"Sure you do! Just stop and think a minute. Here's a man who offers three hundred a week to

a country fellow for sending a few wireless messages. The country fellow's friends hear about it. What is more natural than that they should want to be in on it too?"

"Yes—I guess that's right," Osborne said hesitatingly.

"Then Peloti will think we're practicing a mild form of blackmail. Don't you get it? You tell him we want to get in on it too. Tell him we'd like—say—twenty-five dollars a week each. He'll come to the conclusion that that's hush money, and he'll shell out quick. Twenty-five a week is nothing to him. But the big thing is, it will lull his suspicions to sleep. If you came out flatfooted and said we didn't know anything about the proposition he made you, he just wouldn't believe you. But if we steal his thunder—make him think that we imagine we're pretty smart—he'll fall for it like a ton of bricks. You watch."

"I think Bob's right," Ned approved. "As I get it, we're supposed to be country wise guys. We happen to hear Peloti offer you three hundred a week, and we want some easy money too. So we sort of blackmail him for twenty-five a week each. He'll pretend to be sore, but all the time he'll be laughing up his sleeve at how he's putting it over on us. Am I right, or am I right?"

"You're right," Bob declared. "That's the layout, Osborne. How do you like it?"

"I like it fine, now. I didn't at first, because I didn't understand it."

"Sure! Do you think you can put it over?"

"I think so."

"So do I," Harry broke in. "When I was listening to you talk to Peloti, I was thinking you'd make a good actor. That part when you asked him if he was from the Radio Commission was great."

"I just happened to think of that."

"You can do it all right," Bob said assuredly. "Now there are a few other things to settle. After this, we'll have to be careful how we visit you. Peloti might have this house watched. Look, Osborne, have you got a car?"

"Sure—got a flivver out back."

"Well, can you come to town the day after tomorrow?"

"Yep. Got to anyway."

"Good! Suppose you come to the Hotel Esplanade, and come right up to Room 404 without talking to anybody. Can you be there at three o'clock sharp?"

"Sure. I'll be there."

"Fine. Are there any more questions you want to ask now?"

"Yes, there are. Am I supposed to go in with Peloti—accept his money, and tell him I'll obey his orders?"

"Certainly!"

"Isn't that known as a double-cross?" Osborne insisted.

"No, it's not! You're on the side of law and order from the beginning. If you really were in Peloti's gang, and then welched on him and told the police about him—that would be the double-cross. What you are doing is perfectly right. Fellows like Peloti deserve no sympathy. Did you know that in the past month two men have been beaten up—one at our hotel, in the next room, and another behind the Coast Guard station? One may die—he's in a bad way in the hospital. That's Peloti's work. Don't waste any sympathy on eggs like him."

"He really—beat men up?"

"He might not have done it himself, but it's dollars to doughnuts he ordered it done."

"And one of the men may die?"

"He stands a good chance of kicking off. The other, Frenchie, who, by the way, just escaped from jail, was going to get the hot-foot. They were going to burn the soles of his feet with matches. We broke in just in time."

"Burn the soles of his feet with matches!"

"Yes! And they hit him and cut his face up plenty."

Osborne shuddered. When he spoke again his voice was calm, almost flat. "I'll do as you say," he

said. "I'll do everything I can to put Peloti behind bars."

"That's the spirit!" Bob said enthusiastically. "And you come to the Esplanade at three o'clock the day after tomorrow. Room 404. Remember that. The door will be unlocked. Walk right in."

"Here you are!" a gay voice called, and Mrs. Osborne entered with a tray laden with lemonade and cakes. "Refreshments!"

The boys were quite thirsty, and finished up all the lemonade. Then, shaking hands with Mrs. Osborne and her son, they left.

That night they told Luke Harper what had occurred. He was loud in his praise at Bob's methods, and told them he'd be with them when Osborne came to report.

"We'll work this thing out yet," he exclaimed. "By the way, they think Frenchie is hiding around here some place. A cop on his beat back by the old fish pound—you know, over at Meeker avenue—saw someone who looked like Frenchie and chased him, but he escaped."

"Maybe he's living in the fish pound."

"That's what I thought. I told Bill to detail a couple of men to search the place. But I don't expect any results."

The following day was a quiet one. Bob, Ned and Harry went swimming, and in the evening rode over to the Bay. They saw old Tenpenny fishing

as usual, but when he saw them he rowed ashore and scrambled out of the boat. Evidently his craft had been washed safely ashore in the storm.

"Say, fellers! Say fellers!" he began. "I want to tell you something."

"Go ahead," Bob laughed.

"You know the other night—when you pulled me out of this here Bay—I didn't thank you nor nothin'—I was so upset and all—"

"Forget it," Bob said kindly. "We understand. But what was the idea of going out through that window?"

Tenpenny shook his head. "Blamed if I know," he confessed. "I must have been out of my mind. Wanderin' around in the rain like that—"

"How do you feel now?" Ned inquired.

"All right. But I want to thank you fellers—and if I can ever do anything for you—"

"Forget it," Bob said again. "Say, where's that big boat we saw you in first? Isn't it fixed yet?"

"Oh, I sold that," the man replied.

"It was really yours, then?"

"Well, part of it was. I had sort of a share in it. But it was more trouble that it was worth. So I sold out."

"I see. Catching many fish these days?"

"Not so many. Enough. But I want to thank you fellers—"

They laughed, and turned to go.

"Take it easy," Harry called.

"You bet I will!"

"Nice old codger," Ned said, as they walked back to their car. "I feel sort of sorry for him."

"So do I," Bob agreed.

"Shall we stop at the Coast Guard station?" Harry asked.

"Don't see much point to it," Bob said slowly.

"Let's get back to the hotel. I'm sort of tired."

They rode back slowly, listening to the radio in the car. It was just getting dark. An orchestra was playing from a New York studio, but it wasn't so good, so Bob switched the set over to short wave.

By great good luck it happened to be tuned to the police broadcast station at Bellemar headquarters. A voice was saying:

"All police cars go immediately to the old fish pound on Meeker avenue. All police cars go immediately to the old fish pound on Meeker avenue. Emergency call! All police cars—"

"Golly!" New exclaimed. "Something's up!"

"Frenchie!" Bob said immediately. "They must have caught him! Maybe he's putting up a fight."

"Listen!" Ned interrupted.

The announcer continued:

"Surround old fish pound on Meeker avenue. Emergency call. Stop all suspicious persons in vicinity."

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREAT FISH FIGHT

THE old fish pound on Meeker avenue was south of the Hotel Esplanade, and back from the ocean about three blocks. Fishermen, landing their boats on the beach, would load their catch into wagons which would transport the fish to the pound, where they were weighed, iced and sold to fish dealers for retail distribution.

The building was large and wandering, for since it was originally built in 1900 several additions had been made, giving it the appearance of a structure that couldn't quite make up its mind when to stop growing. Due to these addenda, the building offered an ideal place for a man to hide. Some of the rooms were out of use, and were never visited. The smell of fish was pretty bad, but a person fleeing from the law would not consider this a material objection.

When Bob and his friends reached the vicinity of the pound, two policemen stopped the car.

"Where you fellers going?" one asked.

"We heard the broadcast from headquarters," Bob replied quickly, "and came right over."

"Oh, I see," the officer said, though what he saw Bob had no means of knowing. "Go ahead. Only be careful. They say he's a dangerous guy, and he may have a friend with him."

"Then it is Frenchie?" Bob demanded, risking a guess.

"Yes, it's Frenchie all right, if that's what you call him. The Canadian they had in jail. He's in the pound. Won't come out."

"O. K., thanks," Bob said, and continued toward the building. They were now within the police lines, and would not be questioned further.

"Guess he thought we were detectives," Harry declared.

"You think he did?" Bob asked innocently.

"As if you didn't want to give that impression," Ned laughed. "That radio stuff sure fooled him. Well, now we're here, let's see the fun."

"We'll go around back," Bob began, when a voice hailed them.

"Bob! Hey, Bob! Wait a second!"

It was Luke Harper. He ran up, puffing a bit, and put his hand on Bob's shoulder.

"They got Frenchie in there," he panted. "Won't come out. They say he's got a gun. Better be careful."

"I didn't know he was so desperate," Bob said.

"Neither did we. Evidently he is, though. There's a squad going to rush the place in a min-

ute, from the rear. Let's see how they make out."

There was a loading platform in the back, leading to a wide door. If they could get in this, they could capture the fugitive easily.

"How the mischief did he get in there in the first place?" Ned asked. "He must have known some of the fishermen."

"Not necessarily. He could get in at night, easily enough. Except for the times when the boats come in, this place is practically deserted. As it is now, Frenchie has the whole pound to himself, unless he's got a pal in there with him. Some of the cops thought they saw another man duck past a window.

"Let's watch this—they're going to rush him!" Harry exclaimed.

"Will he really put up a fight?" Bob wondered aloud. "I can't get this layout at all! Frenchie isn't a killer. Why don't they—"

"The chief is pretty sore," Luke said briefly. "Frenchie just walked out on him, you know. He gave orders that he wants him back, at any cost."

"That's wrong," Bob declared decidedly. "It isn't worth it."

"I know it—but Bill is pretty hot-headed. There they go—"

Four uniformed men were crossing the space between the edge of the woods which bordered the pound in the rear and the loading platform. They

were running, and all of them carried drawn guns. Three of them held objects in their other hands.

"Smoke bombs!" Bob said excitedly. "Or maybe tear gas."

There was a large window just above the loading platform. As they reached a point below this, from the window came, not a fusillade of shots—but a fusillade of iced fish, thrown so accurately that two of them, large bass, struck two of the men in the face, almost knocking them from their feet.

"For the love of Pete!" Luke gasped, and then roared with laughter. "He's fighting with fish!"

"And what an arm!" Harry yelled. "He'd make a good pitcher!"

"Two strikes—and both bass!" Ned laughed. "I'll bet those cops never had this happen to them before!"

This was quite true. So surprised were the attackers, that they hesitated momentarily, and as they did so another large fish, accurately thrown, caught a third man in the chest. He staggered in his tracks.

"Why don't they throw 'em back!" Bob chuckled. "They could have a fish duel!"

As he spoke another denizen of the deep flew from the window, but this one missed. By this time the police had recovered, and again made for

the loading platform. As Bob saw the guns in their hands he came to a sudden decision.

Without a word to the others he ran toward the platform.

"Wait a second!" he yelled. "Wait, you fellows!"

They saw him coming, and paused.

"Don't go in there with guns!" Bob shouted.

"I'll get him out for you—I know him! Wait!"

A lieutenant of police ran toward him.

"What's the idea—what's the idea!" he exclaimed excitedly. "What you butting in for? Who are you?"

"I saved that man's life," Bob replied calmly. "If you want him out of there I'll get him for you, without any shooting or throwing tear gas bombs."

"How do you figure?" the lieutenant demanded. "What can you do?"

"Let me try, will you?" Bob pleaded. "If Frenchie has a gun, and he gets desperate, there's no telling what may happen! Let me go in there, and talk to him!"

"Try and get in! He's a dangerous man. We—"

"He's not a dangerous man," Bob contradicted sharply. "He's just scared. Tell your men to lay off a few minutes."

He did not wait for the reply, but walked directly toward the platform. Under the window he halted.

"Blanche!" he called. "Look out the window!"

A head appeared at the opening.

"What you want?" a voice demanded.

"Blanche—can you see who I am? I broke in your hotel room that time when they were going to give you the hot-foot! Don't you remember me?"

There was silence for a moment. Then,

"*Oui*—I remember! You 'ave 'elp me! Yes! What you want?"

"I want you to come down out of there and give yourself up. Nothing will happen to you. I promise."

"They weel shoot me! They weel make go with the guns—"

"No, they won't! If you come down they won't touch you."

For a time Frenchie said nothing. He appeared to be thinking. Finally he called:

"You promise?"

"Yes, I promise! Come on down!"

"All right!"

The head disappeared from the window. All waited tensely, and in a minute they saw the rear door open slowly. Then Frenchie walked out on the loading platform. In his hand he held a frozen fish.

"I brought this for you," he said simply to

Bob, and jumping from the platform he went to the youth.

"Thanks," Bob said, trying to hold back the laughter that was bubbling within him. He took the fish gingerly. "Now, Blanche, you won't mind going back to jail for a while, will you?"

The Canadian shrugged his shoulders.

"What is to be, weel 'appen. But I do not like these peoples. So I throw fish at them. I am good shot, *non*?" and he drew himself up proudly.

"You sure are," Bob said fervently. "I never saw a better. Now let's go. I'll try to see that you don't remain long in jail, Blanche."

"*Merci bien*. I do not like it there. The food, not good."

"I know it. I'll see that you get better food. All right, boys—" and Bob motioned to the lieutenant, who was standing near, mouth agape. "You can take him away. But don't be rough with him—or you'll be sorry."

"I'll second that," Luke exclaimed, stepping forward. "To make sure, I'll call the chief on the phone. Be nice to Frenchie, now."

The lieutenant saw the humor of the situation, and laughed.

"We'll treat him like a prince," he chuckled. "The only thing is, he'll have to have fish for supper tonight."

"I like fish," Blanche said calmly.

Bob turned away, the others following.

"Bob, what a story this would make if the papers got hold of it," the hotel sleuth exclaimed, grinning. "Just the kind of thing they'd go nuts about. 'Fugitive, surrounded in fish pound, fights cops with sea bass.' Wouldn't that be a honey!"

"Sure would," Bob agreed. "But listen, Luke. I've got some important news for you. We contacted Peloti. And—"

"Wait a second," Harper interrupted. "I want to tell you something first. You know Trent, at the Coast Guard station? Well, he's been arrested, charged with being a member of the counterfeiting gang!"

CHAPTER XVII

A THREAT

THIS news was so startling that it almost overshadowed what Bob had to tell. He could scarcely believe it.

"Trent arrested!" he repeated. "A member of the Coast Guard!"

"Yep! The Federal authorities took him. Two detectives came down here from Washington, and communicated with me. They told me they thought they had enough on Trent to take him in, and asked me what I thought of him. I told them I had no information about him, but that didn't satisfy 'em."

"I never liked that guy!" Ned burst out. "I thought there was something funny about him from the start!"

"Neither did I," Harry agreed. "I'm glad they got him."

Bob thought for a moment. Then he said, slowly:

"Fellows, I don't agree with you. I don't like Trent either, but I can't believe he's mixed up with that bunch."

Luke Harper shrugged his shoulders. "Anyhow, they took him to Washington," he said. "Me, I'm not sure what they got on him."

"Why, it all fits in," Ned declared. "Those two men we saw running away from the Coast Guard station. Trent said he hadn't seen them—why, he *must* have seen them! And then the fire. I'll bet—"

"It's not for that they arrested him," Luke asserted. "It had something to do with radio. They think he was giving the counterfeiters information over the radio, when no one was around."

"Did he admit it?" Bob asked.

"No. Denied everything."

"I see. I see." Bob rested his chin in his hand. "I'm sorry for Trent. Listen, Luke, here's what I was going to remind you about. Don't forget that Osborne is to be at the hotel to report to us."

"Great stuff, Bob! Great stuff! Now we're getting some place! I won't forget about friend Osborne and the hotel date! I'll be there, Bob, I'll be there! Do you think Osborne can put it across?"

"Yes, I do. He's a clever fellow—and no coward. I think he'll be able to fool Peloti. And if he does—we're all set!"

The next day Bob, Harry and Ned drove to the Coast Guard station. They were anxious to find out all they could about Trent. As they got out

of their car they saw Tenpenny, just about to embark on another fishing trip.

"Let's talk to him a second," Bob suggested. "He must know something about Trent."

The old fellow greeted them genially.

"Had any luck lately?" Bob asked.

"Well, on an' off! They ain't runnin' like they should."

"Say, Tenpenny," Bob went on, "I hear Trent is no longer with the Coast Guard."

Tenpenny shook his head sadly. "That's right! Too bad about him. They say he's in with them counterfeiters."

"Do you think he is?" Harry asked quickly.

"Well, son, I don't know. But if you ask me honestly I don't believe he is. I don't like Trent personally—too fresh. But I don't think he'd—"

Tenpenny stopped, and appeared to be listening.

"Someone calling?" Ned asked curiously. "I don't hear anyone."

"Huh? Oh," and the old man laughed. "You mean why I stopped then? That's a sort of a habit of mine, I guess. I get sort of a ringing in my ears—the doc says it's from the time I was in the water so long. Did something to my head. Nothing serious," he added quickly. "It'll go away, in time. Blame annoyin' while it lasts, though. Well,

I got to be gettin' on about my business. See you later."

He pulled out into the Bay with strokes very powerful for so old a man. Bob and the others watched him for a few moments, until the boat went around a little point of land.

"Seemed in a hurry," Harry said. "I feel sorry for that fellow. He appears worried all the time."

"Hasn't got much money, I guess," Bob declared. "These fishermen don't lead an easy life, even though they do nothing but fish. They go out in all sorts of weather, hoping to make a big catch. That's how Tenpenny nearly drowned. Come on, let's go up to the station."

Captain Moore, head of the Coast Guard, was out, but Jack Benchly welcomed them.

"Hello, fellows," he said. "Come on in. Things are a little slow now. How's everything?"

"All right," Bob replied. He liked this Guardsman, with his frank, ruddy face and blue eyes. "How's everything with you?"

"So-so! Can't kick."

They entered the station, and Jack drew out his pipe and lit it. Then he looked at them quizzically.

"Heard about Trent?" he asked.

"Yes, we did," Bob replied. "I'm sorry."

"Me too. Trent wasn't exactly popular with us, but it seems hard to believe—"

"What happened, exactly?" Bob inquired, for

Benchly had stopped. "Why did they arrest him?"

Benchly took a few drags on the pipe, and motioned them to take seats. He hesitated, then burst out:

"I'll tell you. I've been aching to talk this over with somebody. You know about the counterfeiters who are supposed to be working in this section, don't you?"

Bob and the others nodded.

"Well, it's pretty serious, I guess. The mob seems to be so well organized, and to possess such information, that no one can catch them. So the Feds figured that they're using radio. You see the theory is that they land a lot of the fake money around here some place, but how they do it is another question.

"So we've had orders to be on the watch for any suspicious radio signals. And I don't mind telling you we've heard some. But we can't figure out where they come from!"

"Is there another station near here?" Harry asked.

"You mean radio station? Yes, that fellow Osborne. But he's been thoroughly investigated. He gets a clean bill."

"Yes, he hasn't anything to do with it," Bob corroborated.

"All right. Well, the other day, in the late afternoon when I was off, Moore was asleep down

here. He was awakened by the noise of the radio upstairs buzzing away. He hopped up, ran upstairs, and found Trent at the key."

"He did!" Bob exclaimed.

"Yep! Trent wasn't supposed to touch it. Moore went right up in the air. He asked Trent what was the big idea, and Trent told him he wasn't sending anything, just practicing. He showed Moore where the sending switch was pulled, but Moore didn't believe him. He thought Trent pulled it when he heard him coming up the stairs.

"You mean Trent claimed he wasn't actually transmitting?" Harry inquired.

"That's it. Anyhow, Moore called him a liar. Then he telephoned to Washington. Two dicks came down and took Trent."

Bob bit his lip. "It does look sort of bad," he said.

"Yeah! There's no way of telling whether Trent was really sending stuff out. If he was, he may have been doing it all along. They know signals have been coming from this neighborhood. Now if they were coming from our station—"

"It seems almost impossible," Bob declared.

"I know it does," Benchly admitted. "But stranger things than that have happened. Trent might have been sending stuff at night. We all sleep pretty sound, and the bedrooms are on the

first floor. We might not have heard him. I don't know—"

"What do you think now?" Harry demanded triumphantly of Bob. "Still think Trent is innocent?"

Bob didn't answer immediately. He arose, and the others followed suit. "We better be going," he said simply.

"O. K.," Benchly agreed wearily. He seemed depressed by the stigma that was attached to his station. "Come in again. And if you hear anything, let me know."

They promised that they would, and getting in their car drove back to the hotel. They all were pretty quiet, talking little. Tomorrow, when Osborne came to report, they might learn something. Thus far things weren't working out so well.

None of them slept exceptionally well. They spent the next morning wandering about the hotel grounds, and right after lunch Luke came to their rooms.

"We'll wait for Osborne," he said. "We could play a little cards in the meantime, or—"

But they had no heart for cards. They were too eager to hear what Osborne had to say.

Promptly on time he appeared. Closing the door behind him, he faced the four who sat staring at him.

"Did Peloti come?" Bob asked.

Osborne shook his head. "A boy on a bicycle left this note," he replied, and held the paper out to Bob. "Read it."

They bent over the paper. The words were:

"When you see your friends in the Esplanade, tell them Angy Peloti graduated from grammar school some time ago. He doesn't fall for kid tricks any more. Tell them, too, that they'd better stop playing correspondence school detectives, or they'll get hurt."

There was no signature.

CHAPTER XVIII

BOB'S DECISION

LUKE HARPER raised his head and looked at Bob.

"It might," he said, "storm a bit."

Osborne appeared nervous. His hand shook a little as he reached for the note.

"I guess Peloti is on to us," he said.

"It seems that way," Bob declared. "In fact there's no doubt of it. I thought he might fall for that stuff, too."

"Peloti's a wise bird," Luke announced. "He's got a lot of men in his pay. You never know who's with him. Even some of the bell-hops here—"

"One of them followed me upstairs," Osborne said.

"What did he want?" Luke inquired.

"Asked me if I had any baggage."

"Did he see you come in this room?"

"I guess so."

Bob frowned. "That's not so good. He may be one of Peloti's men. Luke—" he stopped.

"Yeah?"

"We've got to do something, and do it quick. Where does this Peloti hang out?"

"Over at Woodhurst. That's about thirteen miles from here, along the coast toward New York. He's got sort of a night club there. I think it's called the Open Door."

"Good name for it. Luke, I'm going to pay a call on Mr. Peloti. Tonight!"

"You're going to the Open Door? Boy, don't you do it! You might get hurt. That's a tough place."

"I've been in tough places before."

"But what's the sense? What good will it do? What are you going to say to him?"

"I haven't got that quite figured out yet. But I'm going, and alone. Just to see what happens."

"Alone!"

"Yep! All alone."

"Can't we come with you?" Harry demanded. "Let Ned and me come, Bob! Why should you—"

"No, I'm going alone. It's the only way I'll accomplish anything. I've got sort of a plan."

"What is it?"

"I can't tell you now."

"But you need some sort of protection! Let us go up there with you. We won't go in. But if anything happens—"

"Nothing will happen. I know what I'm doing. You just tell me how to get there."

"But—"

"Listen. I won't stick my head in the lion's mouth. I'll tell you, Luke. At ten o'clock tonight, you call me at the Open Door. I'll tell the man I'm expecting a call at that time. You ask for—let's see—Joe Bannon. I'll tell him that's my name. Then, if I don't come to the phone, you'll know something's up, and you can come on down."

"Well, I don't like it," Luke protested. "I'd rather we went with you. But the phone call will be some protection. What time do you figure on starting?"

"Right after supper."

"All right, if you insist," Luke sighed. "You better take a gun with you. It might come in handy."

"No sir, no gun. I'll go just as I am. A gun would do more harm than it would good. It would give the whole thing away. Now don't worry, I can take care of myself."

"You always have," Ned agreed, "but there's always a first time, you know. Be careful, Bob."

"I sure will. Well, Osborne, I guess there's nothing more you can do. Peloti seems to have called the turn."

Ned and Harry realized that further protest was useless. Bob had made up his mind to see Peloti. Why, they could not guess. Osborne left,

after promising to communicate with them if anything developed.

The four sat in the room after Osborne had gone, talking in low tones. Luke Harper appeared to be waiting for something. Suddenly the phone rang, and he leaped to his feet.

"I'll take it," he exclaimed. "I'm expecting a call."

The conversation that followed was one-sided in the extreme. Harper said "yeah" five times. Aside from that, and "hello" and "good-bye," the other party did all the talking. When the detective replaced the receiver his face was grave.

"That was Washington," he said. "Trent still refuses to talk. I'm beginning to believe he's not implicated at all."

"That's my opinion," said Bob.

"The chief just told me that they got word a shipment of fake money is on its way here from Canada. They got this far in their investigation—that the money is made in Canada some place, shipped here, and then distributed. The chief says it's up to me to clamp the lid down on the gang that operates from this side."

"But how do they ship the money?" Harry inquired. "You mean by boats? Someone coming along the coast—"

"That's just it," Luke interrupted. "That's what we want to find out. Goodness knows how

we'll do it!" and he sighed ponderously. "I've tried everything I can think of. If this lot gets through—"

He threw up his hands in a hopeless gesture.

"I might as well resign," he finished.

"What else did your chief say?" Bob asked, leaning forward.

"That's about all. That he got word the counterfeiters will send a load through within the next ten days. Where, or when, he doesn't know. And I'm supposed to round up the gang with that amount of information! It can't be done, that's all."

"Don't say that," Bob exclaimed sharply. "We've got several leads to follow yet. It seems obvious that radio is playing a great part in the success this gang has in getting the fake money over to this side of the border, and distributing it. What we want to do is to find out what radio station is acting as tip-off for the counterfeiters."

"And how will we do that?" Ned inquired.

"That's where Osborne can help us. Tomorrow we'll pay him a visit—at least, if I'm not here, I want you and Harry to go, Ned—"

"Where will you be?" Ned demanded.

"I don't know. I only say if I'm not here. Now listen. The chances are I'll be with you, but if I'm not, you two go to Osborne and ask him to stick close to his set during the next few days. As close

as he can. And any signals he hears, I want him to jot down, and we'll try to get them deciphered. And ask him to note the exact point on the dials where these signals come in loudest. We may get some place that way."

"Say, Bob," Harry broke in, "if some signals are received that really come from the counterfeiter's radio station, won't that prove that Trent is innocent?"

"Good figuring," Bob approved. "Yes, it will, at least to me. I don't know whether the authorities will feel the same way about it. What do you think, Luke?"

The sleuth shrugged his shoulders. "Hard to say."

"Luke, you don't think I'm butting in here too much, do you?" Bob asked, looking closely at Harper.

"Butting in?" The detective raised his head and stared at the youth. "Butting in? Didn't I ask you to help me? Butting in—why, I like that! Listen, son, the more you butt in the better I'll like it. So far you've helped a lot. And I think that between the two of us we will round up this gang—with the help of Ned and Harry, here!"

"That's the way to talk," Bob declared, grinning. "And that's why I want to see Peloti tonight. I'll have to take the auto—you fellows will have to do your joy riding in a street car or buss."

"Yeah, you know how much joy riding we do," Harry muttered.

"I was only kidding. Now you won't forget to see Osborne tomorrow?"

"We won't. But I don't like this idea that you won't be here. It sounds—ominous."

"Hooey!" Bob laughed. "That's a swell word, and I don't blame you for using it. But don't start worrying about me. I'm going to see Peloti, and have a talk with him. And you call me at ten o'clock—ask for Joe Bannon. That'll be my name."

"But won't Peloti catch on right away?" Ned objected. "If he's on to Osborne, he certainly suspects us! He saw us at Osborne's—why, Bob, you'll walk right into his hands! As soon as he sees you, he'll remember you were at Osborne's, and—"

"No he won't," Bob said quietly.

"What's the reason he won't?"

"Because he didn't see me at Osborne's!"

"But he walked right into the room where we all were! Sure he saw you. He saw all of us."

"He didn't see me. I was in the kitchen when he came back. Peloti never laid eyes on me. That's why I'm going to the Open Door tonight, and have a little talk with Angy. He doesn't know me, and I don't know him. But we'll soon know each other."

"Now I'm going to get a little sleep. I may have to be up most of tonight. Will you fellows beat it, please? Close the door as you go out—I'll have enough Open Doors tonight!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE OPEN DOOR

THE road along the coast to Woodhurst, where was located the Open Door, was winding and lonely. Not many cars travelled it, most of them preferring to take the back road, which was a newly paved highway. But for reasons of his own Bob stuck to the sea road.

He started just as it got dark, and switched the radio on.

"Might as well have a little entertainment," he thought.

A dance orchestra was playing "Through the Door to Paradise," a recent song hit.

"Hope I don't find the opposite of paradise when I go in the Open Door," Bob mused, and smiled. "If Peloti finds out who I am, I stand a good chance of having to fight my way out."

He kept his eyes carefully on the road, for it was not in the best condition. Since the new highway had been constructed, the state took little care of the old one.

Through Bob's mind was running a plan to approach Peloti. It was a risky thing to do, for if

the gang leader suspected Bob was a spy there would be just one end to the story.

"Lucky," Bob thought, "that I was in the kitchen at Osborne's when Peloti came in. Otherwise I wouldn't be able to do what I hope to do."

"—and you'll open the door, as you did before, and I'll walk through to par-a-dise!" a crooner sang. Bob, with a sharp twist of his fingers, changed the station.

"Somehow I don't like so much talk about doors," he decided. "I'd rather hear about windows or something."

The station next on the dial was broadcasting sport results, and Bob listened to these contentedly. It took his mind off the job ahead of him, and he didn't care to face that any sooner than was necessary. Peloti, as he had proved, was a hard man to deceive.

As Bob rounded a curve, with the sea on his right and thick woods on the left, there came a sudden loud "pop!" and then that irregular "s-s-s-s-s" which to every autoist tells but one story—a puncture.

"Good night," Bob groaned. "A puncture, in this place! Hope there's air in the spare. If there isn't—"

He shut off the ignition and leaped out. Yes, there was air in the spare tire. Bob pulled up the seat and got out the tools—the jack and wrench.

It was quite dark here, and he had to feel his way about for the most part. But finally he managed to get the jack under the car.

"Now, by jingoes!" he exclaimed, and pushed down on the handle. It raised the car—which promptly rolled forward off the jack.

"Forgot to put the brake on—what a ninny!" Bob said savagely. "Now I've got to do it all over again."

"In trouble, buddy?" a voice asked.

Bob looked up in surprise. He hadn't heard the other car pull up, so intent was he on his labor.

"Why—I've got a puncture," he replied, trying to see the speaker, who was in a sedan, headed in the same direction as Bob's car.

"Tough luck! This is a bad place to get a puncture. Hey, what you fellows say—" and he turned his head—"shall we help this guy?"

"Sure!" came a rumbling voice from the back of the car. "Why not? I ain't had any exercise to-day."

At that the car doors opened, and three men stepped out. Bob had never seen any of them before. They looked like pretty tough customers.

"Got a jack and wrench?" one of the men inquired.

"Yes. I had it jacked up a little, but it slid off."

"Lemme see," one of the three said, taking the jack from Bob's hands. He was a huge fellow,

with shoulders like an ape. The jack looked like a toy in his big hands.

"I'll fix this," he said gruffly. "You can take the spare off. Mack, you loosen the lugs on the flat. We'll have this done in no time."

The speaker appeared to be sort of a leader, for the others followed his instructions without a word. They certainly worked fast, for almost before Bob knew it the flat tire had been replaced and the punctured one was on the back of the car. His helpers even put the tools away for him. Then they all lit cigarettes.

"Say, buddy, where was you bound for?" the ape-like one asked.

"Woodhurst."

"Woodhurst, eh? Why, that's where we was goin'. Know anyone there?"

"No, but I've got a message for someone."

"Who?"

The word shot out like a revolver bullet. The man leaned close to Bob, his face uncomfortably near.

"Angy Peloti."

"Peloti—is that so, is that so!" The big man drew deeply on his cigarette. "You've got a message for Peloti, have you? Hear that, gang?"

The other two nodded. The speaker continued:

"We happen to be friends of Peloti. You can give the message to us. Save you a trip—maybe."

Bob shook his head. "I can't do that. I was told to give it to Peloti, and no one else."

"Oh, yeah?" The man with the huge shoulders seemed to hesitate a moment. Then he snapped his fingers. "All right. We'll take you to Peloti. I'll ride with you—Mack, you and Silver follow us. Follow us, understand?—Don't get ahead of us. O. K., let's go."

He climbed into Bob's car, and took the wheel. Bob was about to say something, then thought better of it. They drove along in silence for a time, then the man asked:

"What's your name?"

"Joe Bannon."

"Joe Bannon, hey? Let's see—no, can't say I know the name. How come you met Peloti?"

"I have never met Peloti. I have a message for him."

"Who from?"

Bob laughed. "Listen, friend. You're asking a lot of questions. I don't know who you are. You say you're a friend of Peloti's. How do I know that? You may even be a cop, for all I know."

"A cop!" There seemed to be something very humorous about this, for the big fellow threw back his head and roared. "A cop—me! Boy, that's funny. No, buddy, I ain't a cop. But I don't blame you for bein' careful. All right, we'll wait. You can give your message to Peloti direct. Say,

how you think the Yanks will do this year? They got a nice pitchin' staff. I seen 'em play."

"Yeah, they're not bad. But they need batters. I saw a game earlier in the season." Bob hadn't, but he wanted to continue this line of talk. "I noticed the boys step back from the plate when they swing. Never get any place that way. They need a few more sluggers like the Babe."

"You said it. I used to be pretty good myself." He hunched his shoulders. "Ever hear about that guy that caught the ball thrown from the Washington monument?"

"Yes, was that you?"

"No, it was two other guys!" Again he threw back his head and laughed, and Bob joined in. It would do no harm to make friends with this man, if he were a pal of Peloti's.

The man was a good driver, and certainly knew the road. In a short time they entered the small village of Woodhurst. This was a typical seashore town, with one main street. The man at the wheel turned up a side road, and in a few minutes Bob saw the lights of what appeared to be a roadhouse. In front of this they stopped. The driver leaned out and called to the men in the other car:

"Take that boiler around and put it in the garage!"

"O. K.!"

The man got out, and Bob followed. He was

glad the driver hadn't noticed the radio in the car, for Bob had turned this off when he got the puncture.

"Let's go in," his companion said. "You go first. There's the door."

There was a large sign on the lawn, "*The Open Door*." Bob walked up the steps, and waited on the porch.

The big fellow was right behind him. "Go ahead in," he ordered.

Bob obeyed. He stepped into a dim hallway, which evidently led into the main room of the roadhouse. There was a narrow flight of stairs and Bob glanced up, but saw no one. He and his companion waited in the hall, and in a few moments the other two men entered.

"Mack, you and Silver take Bannon in to a table. Order me some coffee. I'll go up and see if Angy is in."

He mounted the stairs. The others threw their hats on a chair, and Bob did the same with his. Mack motioned to Bob to come with him. They went down the hall and turned right into a fairly large room, in the center of which was a dance floor. A three-piece, colored orchestra was at one end, but they were not playing. There were three couples at tables. The lights were dim here also, and Mack pointed to a table in the corner. Bob

walked over and sat down. Mack and Silver sat on either side of him.

"What'll you have?" Mack demanded.

"Chicken sandwich and a cup of coffee," Bob replied.

"O. K. Bounce! Come over here and take the gent's order."

A waiter, short and fat, moved toward them. At that moment the orchestra burst into sound. They were playing "Through the Door to Paradise."

CHAPTER XX

TAPPING A TELEPHONE

BOB didn't feel much like eating. He ordered the sandwich and the coffee because he thought it would look better if he pretended to take this whole thing as a matter of course. If those with whom he was sitting guessed the turmoil taking place in his breast, there would be small chance that he could put over his plan.

One of the couples arose and moved languidly out on the dance floor. Bob watched them. The man was tall and quite thin, with a hooked nose and eyes that seemed too close together. The girl was quite pretty. She was slender and her hair was brown and wavy. Certainly not the type one would expect to find in a place like this.

Bob felt rather sorry for her. He thought perhaps that she was compelled by some trick of fate to accept the attentions of this fellow, who surely was distasteful to her. Then, as they danced near his table, Bob heard her say:

"And listen, baby, you tell that Ruth Downey if I find her hangin' around you any more I'll bite her ears off. See?"

Bob couldn't help grinning. His calculations evidently were a bit off.

The coffee and food arrived, and Bob began eating. Thus far his friends said not a word, but finally the one called Silver, a stocky, rough-appearing fellow, of perhaps twenty-eight or thirty, exclaimed:

"I forgot me book."

"What?" Mack said.

"I forgot me book. You know, the one I was readin' at Porter's. Hang the luck! I wanted to finish it, too."

"What was the name of it?" Bob asked.

"I sort of forget. Pretty good, though. Let's see. The name had some'pin to do with baseball."

"Baseball?"

"Yeah. Oney the book wasn't about baseball. Just the name. Kind of a crazy name. Feller wrote was—uh—Verne. That's it. Verne. Let's see. Yeah, the name was about playin' baseball under the ocean."

"Playing baseball under the ocean!" Bob repeated in surprise.

"Yeah. Crazy name, like I said. Book is pretty good, though. Hey, Mack, what was the name of it?"

"How should I know—you was readin' it, not me!"

"All right, all right, don't get sore. Let's see. Baseball under the ocean. I got it—I got it!"

"What is it?" Bob asked, amused.

"Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea."

"Twenty Thousand Leagues—" Bob had to bite his lips to keep from laughing.

"Yeah! Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea. Told you it was about baseball. Twenty thousand leagues! Never was that many—except maybe he meant bush leagues. Maybe that's one of the leagues Brooklyn's in," and Silver snickered. "But the book ain't about baseball. Wish I brought it along. I could read it tonight."

"Yes, it's too bad you forgot it," said Bob, still struggling against laughter. "You like it, do you?"

"Sure! Like it fine. You ever read a book?" This with perfect sincerity.

"Yes. I have."

"What book did you read?"

"Well—I—can't just think of the name—" He felt that if he said another word he'd surely burst into laughter and spoil everything.

"That's the way it is with me. I can remember what the book's about, but I can't always remember the name. Hey, Mack, you want anything to eat?"

"Naw."

"Me, either."

Again they relapsed into silence. The orchestra

stopped, and the couple who were dancing resumed their seats. Bob heard the girl say to her friend:

"Cousin me eye! She wasn't your cousin. You heard what I said. I'll bite her ears off."

Bob finished his sandwich. In a few moments the big man came to their table and sat down.

"Fix you up all right?" he asked Bob.

"Sure! Fine!"

"Good! Well, I saw Peloti."

"What did he say?" Bob asked eagerly.

"He wants to know who the message is from."

"Can't I tell him that?"

"Nope. You tell me, I'll tell him."

Bob thought for a moment. Then he reached in his pocket. As he did so, the three men reached for theirs, quick as a flash. Bob smiled.

"Nothing like that. I haven't got a gun on me. Didn't think I needed one, since I'm a friend of Peloti's—or at least a friend of his friend. I haven't got a gun."

"Oh," said the big fellow, and relaxed. "Well, who's your message from? Come on, spill it!"

Bob took something from his pocket. He passed it to his questioner, and said:

"Give that to Peloti. I guess he'll see me then."

The man stared at his hand. His face grew red.

"Say what is this—a joke?" he snarled.

"What's the big idea? You think Peloti is—"

"Never mind," Bob said quickly. "You just give

him what I gave you. Tell him that's who my message is from. He'll understand."

"Well—" The man hesitated. Then he arose. "All right. I'll do it. But if you're tryin' to give me a ride—"

"I'm not. You'll see. Simply give what I gave you to Peloti, and tell him that's who my message is from."

"O. K."

As he arose he motioned to Mack and Silver, who nodded. Then he left and Bob could hear him going upstairs.

"He's a bad man to fool with," Mack said, as though to himself.

"I'm not fooling with him," Bob replied.

He glanced at a clock on the wall. The hands were close to ten. Luke had promised to telephone at ten.

"Got a date?" Silver asked, seeing Bob looking at the clock.

"No. But a guy is going to call me here at ten o'clock. Fellow I'm in business with."

"What business?"

"Importing."

"Importing, hey? Oh, I get it," and he grinned. "Yeah. That's a good business. We're in that too."

The fat waiter, the one called Bounce, came to the table.

"Call for a Joe Bannon. You know Joe Bannon?" he said.

"That's me," Bob replied. "Where's the phone?"

"I'll show you," Silver said, and arose. "Follow me."

He lead Bob to another room. It was a wall telephone. As Bob put the receiver to his ear, Silver leaned against the wall and watched him. As casually as he could, Bob said:

"Hello. This you, Slug?"

Luke, at the other end of the wire, understood immediately that Bob wasn't alone.

"Yes, this is Luke," he said. Bob kept the receiver close to his ear, so that Harper's voice would not reach Silver. "Listen, Bob. I realize you're not alone. I'll ask you questions—you just answer 'em. Are you all right?"

"Sure."

"Good! Did you see Peloti yet?"

"Nope."

"Expect to see him?"

"Yep."

"Does it look as though they're on to you?"

"Nope."

"Do you need any help?"

"Nope."

"Do you expect to get back tonight?"

"Can't tell."

"Now listen. Is there anything you want me to do?"

"Yes."

"Has it anything to do with the Coast Guard station?"

"No."

"With Osborne?"

"Yes."

"Is it about a radio message?"

"Yes."

"Do you want him to be listening in at any particular time?"

"Yes."

"Listen. Put your hand up to the transmitter, and tap with your fingernail the time. Keep talking while you do it."

"No—that's not it. You know, some guys listen too much. I never did like guys that did nothing but listen all the time."

"Oh—I get you! You want Osborne to send out a message!"

"That's it."

"Right. Send it tonight?"

"Yes."

"Now let's see. I've got to figure out how you can tell me who Osborne is to contact. Is it a name?"

"No. I should say about ten would do. He can't use more than that."

Bob saw Silver grin at this, and knew what the man was thinking.

"Ten!" Luke repeated. "You mean ten o'clock?"

"Nope."

"Then—you mean you want Osborne to sound that call—ten? Spell out ten?"

"Now you got it, big boy."

"All right. He's to repeat that—ten. I suppose that's the signal Peloti uses. Now about the time he is to call. You said tonight. Tap out the time you want him to call. And keep talking."

"O. K. You tell that fellow if he doesn't come through soon he doesn't get any more stuff, see?" Bob was gently tapping the transmitter, as though it were a nervous habit. "I'm tired of him pulling that stuff all the time." Tap, tap, tap. "Who does he think he is?" Tap, tap, tap, tap. "We can't do business on credit." Tap, tap, tap, tap. "Remember, now—you tell him that."

"O. K. I got it. Eleven o'clock. Now about the message. Is it to arrange a date some place?"

"Yep."

"Around here?"

"Sure."

"On land?"

"No."

"Then it must be on the water. Is it at Look-out Bay?"

"Yes."

"Fine! Now then. Osborne is to call number ten. Arrange a date on Lookout Bay. Today is Thursday. I'll name over the days, you stop me when I hit the right one. Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday—"

"Check."

"Monday. At night?"

"Yes."

"Start your tapping again."

"Right. No need for that. Same time."

"You mean eleven o'clock?"

"Yep."

"Right. Let me repeat. Osborne sends out a call for number ten. After he does this, he says, 'Lookout Bay, eleven o'clock, Monday night. He repeats this a few times.'"

"Lots of times."

"All right. I got it. I'll see that it's done. Anything else you want, Bob?"

"That's all."

"All right, Bob. I'll ring off now. Good luck, boy—good luck!"

"Thanks—so long!"

"So long!"

Bob replaced the receiver. He wiped his forehead.

"Pretty hot," he said to Silver.

"Yeah, it is, sort of."

But it was not the heat that bothered Bob. That conversation was a great strain on him. He had to keep Silver from guessing what Luke was saying, and at the same time put over what he wanted to tell Luke. And he had done it.

"Some of these customers—" Bob began, when a hand touched him on the arm. It was the man who had driven him.

"Peloti will see you," he said.

CHAPTER XXI

PELOTI

As BOB climbed the stairs his heart was hammering, partly from excitement and partly from triumphant exultation. He had put it over. With Silver at his elbow, listening to every word he said, yet he had succeeded in getting his message through to Luke. Of course Luke had helped tremendously—in fact, had he not been clever enough to guess the situation, Bob could never have done what he did.

So hard was his heart beating that he felt sure, if he faced Peloti, his appearance would give him away. He must stall for time. But how? He was on his way upstairs.

Suddenly he bent down, and the man following almost bumped into him.

"Shoe lace," Bob explained briefly. "Don't want to trip."

It was so dark on the stairs that the big man could not see what Bob was doing. Deliberately he untied the lace, and carefully tied it, taking his time. When he straightened he was himself again, calm and self-assured.

"Top of the stairs, turn right," the man muttered.

Bob obeyed instructions, and found himself facing a closed door.

"Thought this place was called the Open Door," he remarked.

"So it is," said a voice within the room, and the door swung open. "Come right in."

Bob entered. He was in a room furnished with remarkable taste. On the wall were several expensive tapestries. A heavy brass chandelier hung from the ceiling. The pictures were prints of famous paintings. And in a rack on one of the walls was a collection of pipes that ran almost the length of the room. All sorts of pipes were there—including the Heron Pipe, carved in porphyry, one of the most ancient pipes in existence. This was really a museum piece. Then there were pipes of wood, horn, bone, ivory, stone, amber, all wonderfully executed. There was the red clay bowl pipe with the long cherry wood stem, used by the Turks, and the small metallic bowl and the cane stem pipe of the Japanese. Below the rack stood the Persian *kalyun*, or water pipe, ordinarily called the *hookah*.

Bob stared at the collection in amazement. Peloti, watching him, laughed.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"It's great," Bob gasped. "I didn't think there were so many different kinds in the world."

"Well, I'm still adding to the collection. All right, Lefty, you can leave us. See that one there?" and he pointed to the Heron Pipe. "That's one of the oldest pipes in the world."

"It looks it," was all that Bob could say.

"Yes. Well, I guess you didn't come here to talk pipes. You said you had a message for me. Spill it."

"You know who it's from?"

"Yes, I know all right."

"The message is that the cops are getting suspicious, and the man who sent me said that he wants to get out after this load is landed."

"Oh, he does, hey? We'll see about that. You say there's another load coming through."

"Yes."

"When?"

"Monday night, at eleven o'clock."

Peloti stared at him with half-shut eyes. "You seem pretty sure of yourself, young fellow. Who are you, anyhow?"

"Joe Bannon."

"So I understand. That doesn't mean anything to me. How do I know I'm getting a straight steer—that you're telling the truth?"

"That ought to be easy. I'll stay here until one o'clock tonight, or this morning, rather. You tele-

phone to—you know who—and ask him if the stuff isn't coming through when I said—eleven o'clock, Tuesday night."

Peloti nodded. "I'll do that little thing. And if you're lying—" he smiled, but it was an evil smile. "Never mind that. Anything else to the message?"

"Yes. He wants all the men you can round up to be there to take charge of this load. It's going to be the biggest one yet, and he wants protection. He says to come yourself, with as many men as you can get.

"I see. Well, that'll be easy. But I'm not afraid of these hick cops—nor the Feds, either. Say, do you know a fellow named Osborne?"

"No."

"He's got a radio station—amateur. Tried to cross me. When this load is out of the way, I'll take care of him. Anything else you want to tell me?"

"I guess that's all. Oh, yes—the bunch across the line think you ought to pay more attention to business. It's they who want you to take care of this load yourself. They're getting scared."

"Hooey," Peloti said. "But I'll do it. Biggest load yet, hey? That'll be fine—that'll be fine. All right, young fellow. At one o'clock I'll call. If you're on the level, O. K. If not—" He looked away, but Bob saw one hand close, in an expressive gesture.

"I'd like to look at these pipes," Bob said quickly. "Could you explain them to me?"

"Sure thing!" Peloti's eyes lighted up. He was on his favorite subject now. For a full hour he told Bob stories of his collection—how he secured the pipes, how much they were worth, how old they were. Certainly he was well versed in pipe lore.

Later he and Bob went downstairs, and had some more coffee. It was getting near midnight. A few more couples had come in, and Bob watched them dance to the wailing strains of the colored orchestra. Peloti said hello to a few men. They answered him eagerly, evidently anxious to ingratiate themselves.

Peloti looked at the wall clock, and arose.

"One o'clock," he said. "I'll make that call now. He ought to be in. You stay here—the boys will keep you company," and he motioned to Mack, Silver and Lefty, who were at another table. They came over and sat with Bob.

The next few minutes were anxious ones. Bob tried to appear nonchalant, but it cost him an effort. Everything depended on this telephone call. If luck held, he was all right. If not—

"I heard of another book I'm goin' to get," Silver said suddenly. "Guy just told me about it. Says it's got everything in it. Feller named Webster wrote it!"

"Webster?" Bob asked. "You mean Noah Webster?"

"Noah Webster? Naw, he built the ark. Must be somebody else. I'll ask him again."

"What ark?" Mack demanded.

"*The* ark, you dummy! How many arks you think was built? For the flood—the big flood!"

"Flood? What flood?"

"Say, ain't you never read about the flood?"

"Naw. I ain't seen a paper in three days."

"Now what can you do with a guy like—" Silver began, when Peloti entered. He stood over Bob, staring down at him.

"Well?" Bob asked, as casually as he could. "Was I right?"

For a moment Peloti didn't speak. Bob felt a chill of fear go through him. He could scarcely breathe. Had he lost? Did Peloti—

Then Peloti spoke.

"You were right," he said briefly. "All O. K. Everything jake. You want to stay here tonight?"

"No," said Bob weakly, "no, I guess I'll get back. Got some business to attend to early in the morning. Mind if I leave now?"

"Nope. Go right ahead. Here's a souvenir for you."

He handed Bob a jade pipe, beautifully carved.

"Thanks," said Bob. It was all he could manage, just then.

"See you Monday," Peloti called, as he went. "You be there?"

"I'll be there," said Bob.

CHAPTER XXII

READY FOR ACTION

WHEN Bob reached the hotel that night—or, more accurately, that morning—he found the others waiting up for him. They were half asleep when he entered the room, but at the sound of the door opening they sprang up.

"What happened?" Ned demanded.

"Did you get to see Peloti?" asked Harry.

Luke asked no questions. He saw the lines of weariness and strain in Bob's face, and motioned him to lie on the couch.

"Don't try to talk," he counseled. "Just take it easy. Would you like a cup of coffee?"

Bob shook his head and smiled. "It seems to me I've been drinking coffee all night," he said. "Every time I turned around in that place someone would ask me if I wanted a cup of coffee."

"But Bob—everything went O. K.?" Ned persisted.

"Everything went perfect. Luke, we've got 'em!"

"Got 'em!" the detective repeated. "How—what do you mean?"

"I'll tell you. I'm going to make it short, because I'm pretty tired, and it's nearly dawn, I guess. Seems like that way, anyhow. I take it, Luke, that you got to Osborne all right and that he sent the message."

"Yes. Exactly as you said. We didn't take a chance on telephoning but went over to his house. We waited until he sent it out, and left him repeating it."

"Well, it got through all right. And boy, was it a life saver!"

"Come on, Bob, spill it," Harry urged.

"I'll tell you all you need to know. I saw Peloti. I convinced him I had a message from a friend of his. I told him to call up his friend and verify the fact that a load of the stuff was coming through at eleven o'clock Monday night. That was why I wanted Osborne to send out that information. Peloti did call up. Everything worked swell.

"And now, my friends, Monday night we round 'em up!"

He paused and glanced at the others. Luke's face was fairly shining. The arrest of those responsible for the landing and circulation of the counterfeit money meant his job to him. If he succeeded he was a made man in the department. If he failed he was out.

"Are you sure of what you say, Bob?" he asked eagerly.

"As sure as I can be of anything. Now, fellows, I'm sorry but I've got to get some sleep. I'm nearly dead."

"But you haven't told us—" Ned began, when Harry broke in with:

"Don't let's bother him now. We'll know in good time. All right, Bob, you get undressed and hop into bed. Pleasant dreams."

Harry and Ned had the other room, and they went out, closing the door softly, preceded by Luke. Bob aroused himself sufficiently to pull off his shoes. When Harry went in at noon, however, he found Bob asleep with most of his clothes on. No better indication could have been given of the strain under which the young detective had been working.

During the next few days Bob, as far as possible, kept out of sight. He didn't want anything to spoil his carefully laid plans, and if he were seen in the company of Luke, or Harry and Ned, it might be reported to Peloti and all his labor would go for naught.

Each hour that passed brought nearer the probabilities of success. Bob was trying to keep even the police from knowing what he intended, for a man like Peloti, having political allies, might well have friends on the force. To this end Bob asked Luke not to say anything to anyone until the very last moment. He talked to Luke Saturday night.

"Here's what I want to do," he said. "I want to bring the police in on this at the last minute. There's a reason for this, as I suppose you can guess."

"Easy," Luke agreed. "You mean it might get back to Peloti."

"Yes. So here's what I thought: Monday, about noon, you call up your friend the chief."

"You mean Bill Oliver?"

"Yes. You tell him you heard there's likely to be something doing here at the hotel Monday night—don't tell him what it is. Then ask him if he'll have as many reserve men as possible on call. Tell him you may not need 'em, but you want them handy in case. Think he'll do that for you?"

"Sure he will. Bill's a good friend of mine."

"Fine. Then, at ten o'clock, you put your call in. Tell Bill that you need the men, but not at the hotel. Tell him that—but I guess that'll be enough for now. We'll figure out the rest when the time comes. Oh, yes, there's one more thing—do you know where there's a good electrician?"

"Electrician?"

"Yes. I want to have a searchlight put on the car. As big a searchlight as I can find."

"Why, yes, I suppose Norcross, the manager, could tell you about it," Luke said, in a puzzled voice. "But why—"

"You'll see later. Can you arrange it for me? I don't want to go around too much."

"Sure! I get it. All right, Bob, I'll have the light put on."

"If possible, get one of those that are mounted on the run board. I've seen them on police cars."

"I know the type you mean. Anything else?"

"We'll need guns. I suppose you can arrange for those."

"Sure I can."

"Then I guess that's all."

"You're sure we can pull this, Bob?"

"I'm hoping for the best," Bob replied grimly. "We can only try. Say, see if you can get a few good books for me, will you? I'm going to spend most of my time in this room, until Monday night."

"Good idea," Luke approved. "O. K., Bob, I'll bring you some books and magazines."

The time passed slowly enough for Bob. Sunday afternoon he couldn't even read. Outside the sun sparkled upon the sea, yet Bob stayed within the hotel. He played cards for a while with Harry and Ned, but even this palled. He slept poorly Sunday night. Monday, toward noon, a mist blew in and Bob, when he saw it, shook his head.

"That's bad," he said to Harry, who with Ned was in Bob's room.

"Why?" Harry asked.

"If it's foggy tonight it may spoil everything. How's the wind?"

"West, what there is of it."

"That's a help. If it gets stronger it may sweep this mist out of the way. Boy, I sure hope so!"

"I can't see what that has to do with it," Ned exclaimed.

"You will," Bob promised. "Say, how about the searchlight? Is it on the car all right?"

"Yep, and it's a pip! Throws a great beam."

"Fine! Does it turn in all directions?"

"Sure. Every which way."

"That's good," Bob said with satisfaction. "Then I guess everything is all set. When you see Luke, tell him we'll start from here about nine-thirty tonight. Gee, I feel as though I was managing this whole thing, and if it goes sour—" and he laughed ruefully. "There'll be no one to blame but me."

"It won't go sour," Ned prophesied. "I'm betting on you, Bob!"

"Thanks. We'll see. It's a big responsibility I'm taking, because if we fail, it'll be tough on Luke. Say, you fellows ought to try to sneak in a few extra winks this afternoon. You may need 'em."

"How about yourself? Did you sleep well last night?"

"No, I didn't. Too worked up, I guess."

"Yeah. Well, take your own advice—try to knock off a little sleep before supper."

"I will. Don't forget to tell Luke to be here at nine-thirty. He'll bring the guns, I suppose. And have the car outside, all ready to go. We may have to work fast."

"Where are we heading for?" Harry asked.

"Lookout Bay. You fellows put on old clothes, and tell Luke to do the same."

"Right. Baby, if we make out on this—"

"With a little luck, we should," Bob broke in.

"What I want to do is to catch Peloti with the goods. He'll welch, all right—I'm convinced of that. He'll spill the whole racket if he thinks by doing so he'll save part of his own hide. That means the bunch across the border will be taken. So you see how much this means tonight."

"We'll do our best to help you," Harry promised, and Ned said the same.

"I know you will," Bob said gratefully. "You always have. All right, fellows, you better hit the hay for a while. We'll eat here around seven, if that's O. K. with you."

"Sure," Ned agreed. "Tonight's the night—and I got a rabbit's foot I'm going to bring along, too! See you later, Bob!"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE AIRPLANE

AT SIX-THIRTY that night Bob, who, earlier in the afternoon, had thrown himself on the bed, opened his eyes. At first he was a bit confused, for the events of the last week had been so startling as to put his nerves in a state of unrest. But in a moment he became fully awake, and went to the window.

The mist had blown away, and the sea was softly red with the setting sun.

"Going to be fine tonight," Bob exclaimed, and stretched. The sleep had done him good. He felt pepped up—anxious to try his mettle and skill against Peloti and his gang.

He took a hot shower and then a cold one, and as he was dressing Ned and Harry entered.

"How's everything?" Ned asked, looking at Bob anxiously.

"Great," Bob said simply. "I feel fine! Had a couple hours' good solid sleep. Did you see Luke?"

"We did," Harry replied. "He gave me this for you," and Harry held out a beautiful, pearl-

handled, thirty-eight caliber police revolver. "It's the kind the cops use, except theirs haven't got pearl handles. Ned and I each have one."

"Thanks," Bob said, placing the gun in his pocket. "Hope we won't need 'em, but you never can tell. How about cartridges?"

"Luke will give us those tonight. Said he'd be here at nine-thirty on the dot."

"Fine! Well, let's eat. We can order here, and have the stuff brought up. I'm pretty hungry."

Despite their excitement, they all ate a good supper. At nine o'clock there came a knock on the door, and they opened it to admit Luke Harper.

"Thought I'd get here a little early," he said. "How's everything, Bob? All set?"

"All set, Luke," Bob replied. "Now, without wasting any more time, suppose I tell you fellows the plan of action. Remember, I'd like suggestions—I don't want to seem to run the whole show."

"You go ahead and run it!" Luke exclaimed forcibly. "It's your show, Bob—we'll do as you say!"

"All right," Bob said, and grinned. "Then here's the dope: the four of us will go to Lookout Bay in the car. When we get there we'll park as much out of sight as we can and wait."

"Wait for what?" Ned asked.

"For the next move. It'll be up to Peloti then. Luke, did you talk to the Chief of Police?"

"Yep, and he said he'd do all he could. I think he suspects what's up, but I was careful not to say anything definite. I told him I'd call him at nine-thirty, and let him know what was what."

"Then suppose you put the call in now. Ask him to have the men in the radio-equipped patrol cars some place in the vicinity of Lookout Bay—not right at the Bay, but near it. Let's see—they have four cars, I think?"

"Five," Luke corrected. "Two men to each."

"That's ten men. Ought to be plenty. Will you call now, Luke?"

The detective nodded, and in a few moments he had delivered Bob's message to the chief.

"Bill says O. K.," he reported. "Now here's the cartridges for you fellows. I don't have to caution you not to use the guns unless it's absolutely necessary."

"Don't worry, we won't," Bob promised, taking the cartridges, as did Ned and Harry. "And now—let's be on our way."

They went down the emergency staircase, and instead of going through the lobby they passed out by a rear door, for the car was parked in the back. Bob looked at the searchlight and nodded his approval.

"Looks good," he said. "Just what I wanted. Ned, would you mind driving?"

The night was clear and rather cool, the fog

having been entirely blown away. There was in the air something electric, a certain tenseness. As they drove toward Lookout Bay, there was little conversation, nor did they turn the radio on in the car. Each seemed busy with his own thoughts. In a short time, now, things would begin to happen.

Fortunately there was no moon. At Bob's direction Ned stopped the car behind some bushes which grew fairly close to the water's edge. The sand was fairly hard, and they had run the car out as far as they dared.

"Get a good view from here of the Bay," Harry whispered.

"You don't have to whisper—yet," Bob said in a normal tone. He wanted to have Ned and Harry keep as calm as possible, for they would need all their nerve later.

"What time is it?" Ned asked.

Luke looked at his watch. "Ten-fifteen."

"Forty-five minutes yet," Harry said.

"Getting nervous?" Bob asked.

"Who—me? I should say not!" Harry exclaimed. "Why should I be?"

"No reason at all," Bob declared. "By the way, Lucius"—this to Harper—"how's your wife?"

"When you call me that you remind me of her," Luke chuckled. "I'm going to have my name changed, one of these days." He realized that Bob was trying to relieve the tension, and followed

along with him. For half an hour they sat there, talking generalities. Bob even turned on the radio, very softly, and they heard two comedians in New York. They were quite funny, and served to take the minds of those waiting off their coming ordeal.

Then, with a sudden motion, Bob turned off the radio.

"Listen!" he said sharply.

Far off, like the sound of a humming bee, they heard the drone of an airplane motor.

"Hurrray!" Bob exclaimed. "Fellows, we win!"

As they listened, the plane came closer and closer. It was flying in their direction.

"Ned, get that light ready!" Bob ordered. "You can work it, can't you? I haven't tried it out yet—"

"I can do it," Ned said quickly.

"O. K. Pretty soon we ought to see the lights of that plane. I want you to follow the ship with the light—keep it pointed at it, but don't flash it on until I tell you. Get it?"

"Yep," Ned said briefly.

The sound of the motor was quite loud now, and the next moment all saw the green and red lights of the plane.

"There it is!" Bob almost shouted. "Get ready, Ned!"

Ned was standing by the light, both hands on it. He swung it slowly about as the plane came closer.

"I think it's going to pass right overhead!" Bob said tensely. "If it does, we're in luck!"

Now the motor was roaring, for the plane was flying low. It swept across the Bay, and then suddenly was over the car.

"Now!" Bob ejaculated. "Flash it!"

A beam from the powerful light cut through the air. It struck the plane squarely.

"Get the number!" Bob exclaimed. "I see it as C-8431! Harry, you read it!"

"C-8431 is right!"

"And Luke—"

"It's C-8431 all right!"

"Off with the light, Ned!"

Darkness again. Bob appeared to be waiting for something. They watched the plane swing about, come in close to the waters of the Bay, zoom until it seemed as though it landed on the surface, then straighten out, and with the motor wide open it started to climb. Up, up it went, toward the north. Then it was out of sight.

"What was the number?" Bob asked Harry.

"C-8431."

"Right. Harry, I want you to do something now."

"Anything you say, Bob!"

"Thanks. I want you to get over to the Coast Guard station as fast as you can. You'll have to run. We need the car. Then I want you to tell

Captain Moore to call police headquarters and have that plane number sent out over the teletype. The place we want to reach is Montreal—Albany and Montreal. I think the plane will land at either one of those airports. Have Oliver request the immediate arrest of the pilot of plane C-8431. It's a commercial ship, I think. Tell Moore to have Oliver send this message on the teletype—'All airports are notified to watch for plane C-8431, and hold the pilot.' Got it?"

"I got it. Then what?"

"Then wait there. I'm sorry, Harry, to ask you to do this—you may miss the rest of the action—"

"Forget it!" Harry exclaimed. "I'm glad to do it, Bob. Here's where I make an Olympic record. So long!"

He leaped out of the car, and in a moment was running across the sand. Then he was swallowed up in the darkness.

"What do we do, now?" Luke demanded.

"Now," Bob said casually, "we're going to walk down to where Tenpenny Johnson docks his boat. I think he'll be in soon, from fishing."

"What's the idea of that?" Ned asked.

"I just want to see," Bob replied, "what kind of fish he caught tonight!"

CHAPTER XXIV

FISHERMAN'S LUCK

THEY trudged over the sand toward the dock. It was about a quarter of a mile away, and took them about seven minutes to reach it. When they arrived not a soul was in sight.

"Did we miss out?" Ned asked anxiously.

Bob shook his head. "Nope. We'll just sit down here and wait."

"But what—" Luke began, then stopped. He put a hand on Bob's shoulder. "You play it your own way," he said. "This seems crazy to me, but I guess you know what you're doing."

"I do," Bob said decidedly.

"But Tenpenny—I don't get it at all!" Ned protested.

"You will, in a few minutes," Bob said quietly. "Wait—do you hear anything?"

They listened intently. Then to their ears came a strange creaking noise, out on the Bay.

"Here he comes," Bob said.

The creaking sound approached, and now could be identified as the noise made by oars. In a few moments they heard the splash of the blades.

"You stay here," Bob suggested to Luke and Ned. "I want to talk to Tenpenny. I won't be long."

He walked out on the dock. Tenpenny was rowing fast. His boat scraped against the dock, and he sprang out of his craft.

"Hello, Tenpenny," Bob said softly. "How'd you make out?"

"Hey? Who's that?" The man's voice trembled. "Who are you?"

Bob moved to where he could see him. "Just thought I'd drop down," he said, "and see what kind of fish you caught."

"Fish? No fish tonight—bad luck—didn't catch a thing—"

"Nothing at all, eh?" Bob asked gently.

"No—didn't catch a thing! I—"

"Except that bundle under your arm," Bob corrected.

"Bundle? What—what—"

Quietly Bob reached out and took from the old man a water-soaked bundle, to which was attached a string. On the end of the string was a float, painted with luminous paint.

"So that's it," Bob mused aloud. "I wondered how you spotted it in the water. Listen, Tenpenny—you better come clean. I'll help you as much as I can. Who were you going to deliver this package to?"

"No one! Nobody! I just found that—a-floatin' on the water—"

"Never mind," Bob said kindly. "It's all over, Tenpenny. I know what's in the package."

"Well, I ain't done nothin' wrong! They told me it wasn't against the law—an' it ain't! You'll see—"

"Never mind," Bob said again. "Now listen, Tenpenny. You don't want to go to jail, do you?"

"Jail? No! I—I'm a poor man—I ain't done nothin' wrong—"

"All right. You trust me, Tenpenny—I'm your friend. Do you trust me? Didn't you say I was your friend once—didn't I save your life?"

"Yep—you did. I ain't denyin' it."

"Then here's your chance to do me a favor—a big one. Will you do it?"

"If I can—"

"You can, all right. I want you to tell me where you were going to deliver this package."

"To—" and he stopped. "I promised I wouldn't!"

"I'm not asking you to tell me to *whom* you were going to give it—just *where* you were going to deliver it. Then, if you do, I'll help you all I can."

The old man gazed at Bob. His lips were trembling. Suddenly he stepped close.

"At the corner of Boston street and Shephard's Lane," he whispered.

Bob snapped his fingers. "O. K., Tenpenny. Here's your package back." To the surprise of Luke and Ned, he gave the man the bundle. "How were you going there?"

"In my flivver."

"All right—go ahead! Deliver your package!"

Tenpenny seized the bundle and hurried up the dock. Bob watched him go, and leaped toward Luke and Ned.

"What did you return it for?" Ned asked tensely. "We had it then—the counterfeit money—"

"Because we've got to catch Peloti with the goods! Come on!"

They fairly ran toward their car. Bob got behind the wheel and the other two piled in the rear.

"I still don't understand—" Ned started, but Bob shook his head.

"Can't explain now! We've got to catch 'em! Luke, when we reach a phone, you hop out and telephone headquarters—tell the chief to radio to the cars to come to Boston street and Shephard's Lane—as fast as they can get there!"

The car was bouncing toward the road. Once on it, Bob stepped hard on the accelerator. Two blocks beyond they came to a candy store. Luke leaped out and delivered the telephone message.

CHAPTER XXV

BOB'S ADAGE

FIVE blocks from Shephard's Lane, on Boston street, they saw ahead of them Tenpenny's old flivver. Bob kept close behind. As they neared the lane, which was in a deserted section, he dropped back a bit.

"Have your guns ready!" he exclaimed. "We'll give Tenpenny a chance to give the package to Peloti, and then—"

Parked a few yards from the corner was a big black touring car. Bob saw Tenpenny stop beside it and get out. There was no one else in sight. The curtains were up on the touring car, and they couldn't see who was in it.

Bob, leaping out, saw Tenpenny thrust the package forward. The door of the touring car opened, and a hand reached out.

"Now!" Bob yelled, and stepped on the gas.

His car jumped ahead. He steered straight for the black phaeton. As he came alongside he swung the wheel hard, just as the big car started to move forward. Bob's car was right in the path.

"Stop, Peloti!" Bob shouted, and cutting the

ignition he sprang out, gun in hand. Luke and Ned followed.

"We've got you covered!" Luke yelled.

"Tenpenny—get out of the way!" Bob cried.

The old man needed no urging. He had delivered his package. Now he ducked low, and ran for the sidewalk.

"Double-crosser!" a man in the big car yelled hoarsely, and a gun spoke. Tenpenny fell, and lay still.

"They got him!" Ned exclaimed.

"Peloti—the game's up!" Bob was almost at the side of the car, and behind him were Luke and Ned. "Stick 'em up—you and your friends—and get out!"

"We'll get out all right!" Peloti replied. "And fast!"

He fired again, but missed. The driver of the big car slammed the gear in reverse. It shot backward, and swung out to avoid Bob's car, which had been halted directly in front.

"Stop, Peloti, or I'll shoot!" Bob warned.

"Shoot, you—"

The noise of police sirens cut through the night. First one, then two, three, four. They sent their wailing threats far and wide. Peloti heard them, and snapped an order to the driver of his car.

But he was too late. The police cars sped along

Shephard's Lane, and from both directions on Boston street. Peloti was hemmed in.

"Now will you come out—and come nicely?" Bob yelled.

The motor of the touring car stopped. The police cars, sirens still screaming, skidded toward the black phaeton. Searchlights were trained on it.

From the patrol autos leaped uniformed men, guns in readiness. They were led by Chief Oliver himself.

"Come out, Peloti!" Bob shouted again. "All of you!"

In the glare of the searchlights Peloti stepped from his car. Five other men followed him—there were three in the front, and three in the rear. Bob recognized Mack, Silver and the one called Lefty.

"Don't shoot, boys," Peloti begged. "We're finished—we surrender! Only don't shoot!"

"Where's the package?" Bob demanded.

Peloti motioned toward the car. "On the floor," he growled.

Bob reached in and seized the bundle.

"This cooks your goose, Peloti," he said briefly. "Chief, I guess you can take these men to headquarters. I want to see about Tenpenny—"

But Tenpenny was seeing to himself. The shot had just grazed his head. Now he staggered toward Peloti.

"You hit me—you hit me!" he yelled. "I'll get square with you for that!"

"Never mind, Tenpenny," Bob said kindly. "You ride with us. We're going to take a little trip to headquarters. See you there, Chief."

The policemen were snapping handcuffs on Peloti and his gang. Bob nodded to Silver, and asked softly:

"Say, Silver, read any good books lately?"

The man growled an answer. Bob laughed, and helping Tenpenny, he, Ned and Luke got in their car. Tenpenny sat in the front with Bob.

The ride to headquarters was a fast one. All traffic cleared out of the way in obedience to the howling sirens. And in ten minutes Bob, Luke, Ned, Tenpenny and Peloti were in the chief's office. The other prisoners were in cells.

Bob threw the package on Oliver's desk.

"That's what Tenpenny fished out of the Bay, where the plane dropped it," Bob said. "Can you guess what's in it, Peloti?"

"Open it, and find out!"

"I will."

Bob cut the string and shucked off the waterproof covering. All leaned forward anxiously, then Chief Oliver uttered an exclamation.

"Why," he said, "they're nothing but wrappings for liquor bottles! They're just wrappings,

made in Canada and brought here to be used by bootleggers! Harper, you've lost!"

"Didn't I tell you?" Peloti sneered. "Nothing wrong with bringing ordinary paper across the border, I guess!"

"I could have told you what it was!" Tenpenny declared. "I wouldn't do anything wrong—I ain't a criminal! They're just paper, that's all!"

A queer look came into Bob's eyes. He fingered the wrappers. They were undoubtedly what Chief Oliver had said—and could the law get Peloti for transporting paper, no matter what it was to be used for?

"Golly—I guess we made a mistake," Luke said, dazedly. "Bob, I—"

Bob was examining the wrappers. They were tied tightly in a bundle, perhaps five hundred of them. Suddenly he took out his penknife.

"What are you going to do?" Ned asked.

Instead of replying Bob scraped one of the wrappers gently. The others watched him eagerly. The wrappers were of heavy brown paper, quite thick. On them were printed the names of certain brands.

For some moments Bob scraped away. Then he held up the wrapper triumphantly.

"There you are," he cried. "The money's inside—look, here's a counterfeit ten dollar bill!"

And in each of the others the same! Pretty clever scheme, Peloti—but it didn't work!"

"The money is inside the labels!" Chief Oliver repeated.

"Yep. Probably there's \$50,000 worth of fake money here!"

Tenpenny leaned forward. "Jiminy," he said hoarsely, "I didn't know that! Honest I didn't! They told me—"

"I know it, Tenpenny," Bob declared. "Don't worry. We're not after you. What we wanted was Peloti—and we got him!"

"Yes, you got me, all right," Peloti said simply. "Young fellow, you're pretty clever. Pretty clever." He began searching in his pockets and drew forth a sack of tobacco. He looked again, and a disappointed expression came over his face. "I forgot my pipe," he said.

Bob crossed to him, and handed him the jade pipe Peloti had given him at the Open Door.

"I'll give you this back," he declared. "I don't smoke."

"Thanks," Peloti said calmly, and filling it he lit up. "Oh, well—it was fun while it lasted."

"Take him away," Chief Oliver ordered, and Peloti marched out between two officers.

"Wait a second!" Bob called. "I've got something else belonging to you, Peloti."

He gave him the scarab he had found at the Coast Guard station, the day of the fire.

"Just one question," Bob said to him. "Was Trent in with you?"

"Trent? Who's he?"

"I thought not. All right, go ahead."

Peloti, still puffing on the jade pipe, walked through the door. And now Luke turned to Bob.

"My friend," he said quietly, "I'm not going to try to thank you. I guess you know how I feel."

"Sure," Bob replied warmly, clapping the detective on the shoulder. "This was your work as much as mine, you know."

"Not by a long shot! But, Bob, do you mind if I ask you a few questions?"

"Shoot."

"How did you know Tenpenny was in on this?"

"Ned, do you remember the day after Frenchie was caught in the fish pound—when we went up to the Coast Guard station, and on the way saw Tenpenny?"

"Sure, I remember! He was going out fishing. I remember he left in a hurry."

"Exactly. Well, the reason he left was that he just received a message. Didn't you, Tenpenny?"

"Yep, I did," the old man admitted.

"Received a message? How?" Luke demanded.

"On the radio in his rowboat. He's got a re-

ceiving and sending short wave radio apparatus concealed there. Right, Tenpenny?"

"That's right. Under the seat. Short wave. I learned how to work it." The man seemed a bit proud of his ability.

"I happened to be standing close, and I heard the buzzing of the message coming through. He rowed away quickly, as you remember," went on Bob.

"Sure I did—had to get out and see what they wanted!" Tenpenny said. "But honest, I didn't know about this money—"

"We realize that," Bob admitted. "Well, here's how they worked it: Peloti would send word, by radio, to Canada that it was all right to send the fake money through. He'd name a time and place—we heard him, once, on the set in our car—but I didn't know what it meant, then!"

"Where did he send it from?" Chief Oliver demanded.

"From his station in the Open Door roadhouse. You'll find a complete radio set there, or I miss my guess."

"But—is he a radio man?" Ned inquired.

"No—he used Frenchie! Blanche! That's why Peloti was with him that day in the hotel—Frenchie wanted to quit, and Peloti was trying to scare him into sticking!"

"Then Osborne's message—" Luke broke in, and Bob exclaimed:

"Osborne sent his message. It was received by the gang in Canada, and also by Tenpenny. You got it, didn't you, Tenpenny—that tonight, at eleven, you were to be ready to fish the package out of the water?"

"I sure did!"

"Then, while I was at the Open Door, Peloti called Tenpenny by telephone, and asked if he had received the information. You see, Peloti thought that the radio message came from Canada—and so did Tenpenny! And the gang in Canada thought it was from Peloti! But instead Osborne sent it."

"I'm beginning to see," Luke said. "But boy, you must have done a lot of figuring, Bob!"

"I did. It was necessary. I was pretty lucky when Peloti called Tenpenny. What did he say to you, Tenpenny?"

"Asked me if I got a message from Canada, and what it was. I told him."

"That's what I counted on. Well, anyhow, the date was made for eleven tonight. Tenpenny was ready. The plane from Canada, carrying this counterfeit money concealed in wrappers, flew over the Bay. When it was close to Tenpenny, who was sitting at his little radio station, Tenpenny sent out a signal to drop the stuff. Right, Tenpenny?"

"Right as rain! Reached under the seat and sent it out. Easy."

"By the way, where did you learn radio?" Bob asked him.

"Frenchie—I mean Blanche—taught me!"

"So that's it. Well, it was a swell scheme all right! And that night you almost drowned, Ten-penny—when we saved you, and you escaped out of the window at the boathouse, in the rain—you wanted to pick up a package that the plane dropped, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did. I found it, too—rain and all!"

"Yes—due to the float that was tied on, covered with luminous paint. But you certainly took your life in your hands. So, Luke, I guess that clears everything up, doesn't it?"

"But the fire at the Coast Guard station—I suppose Peloti set that, hoping to disable the radio, so it couldn't intercept his messages. Isn't that it, Bob?"

"That's it. And the reason why Peloti went to see Osborne, was because, with Frenchie in jail, he had no one to operate his set at the roadhouse. Frenchie, by the way, was safer in jail than any place else. He wanted to quit the racket—but when Peloti arranged for his escape, he had to come along. He wasn't sorry to be back in jail again."

"I'll never forget that fish fight," the chief chuckled.

"How about that fellow Trent?" asked Harry.

"Oh, yes, I almost forgot him," Bob replied. "There's no doubt that he's innocent, and they're going to turn him loose."

"Innocent!" exclaimed Ned. "And caught sending radio messages!"

"Yes, he was sending them all right," chuckled Bob, "but there was nothing criminal in them. I had it from a Federal investigator only a little while ago. Trent will soon be reinstated and fully exonerated, except for a mild, official reprimand. It seems he has a girl."

"No fooling!" mocked Harry.

"Sure he has! She's an amateur wireless fiend and she wants to learn to receive fast. So she begged Trent to send out simple messages, wireless love letters, maybe, that she could pick up for practice. That's what he was doing and he was afraid to tell for fear of implicating the girl. But she heard of his arrest and went to the front for him, explaining everything so Trent has a clean bill of health."

"Now, Bob, there's one more question," Luke persisted. "When you went to the Open Door, how did you ever succeed in fooling Peloti—I mean how did you convince him you were one of his gang?"

"I gave him something," Bob said simply.

"Gave him something?"

"Yes. I wanted to convince him that Tenpenny had sent me to him with an important message. So I handed one of his men something to give Peloti, and that convinced him I was really from Tenpenny here."

"But what was it you gave him?" Ned demanded eagerly.

Bob reached in his pocket, and then held out his hand, opening it slowly.

Within it were ten copper pennies.

"Simple, wasn't it?" Bob yawned. "Now, Ned, let's get to the Coast Guard station and pick up Harry. And then, me for bed! Chief, take care of Tenpenny for me. He's all right. He's not a criminal. He was fooled, like we almost were. Come on, Ned—so long, everyone! See you tomorrow, Lucius!"

For once the detective did not correct him.

"Bob," he said, "you're the only person in the world I'll let call me Lucius—except my wife!"

"Thanks," Bob laughed. "Maybe—"

He was interrupted by the entrance of an officer.

"Chief," he exclaimed, "we just got word over the teletype—the pilot of that plane was captured, and he spilled the works! They got the whole gang in Canada!"

"I guess that winds up the case," Bob said. "I

sort of thought he'd blow on the rest of 'em. Luke, you and the chief can take care of those wrappers with the counterfeit money inside. That certainly was one clever gag. You know, I always believed in that old adage—you can't tell a book by its cover! Come on, Ned, let's be on our way. So long, Lucius!"

THE END

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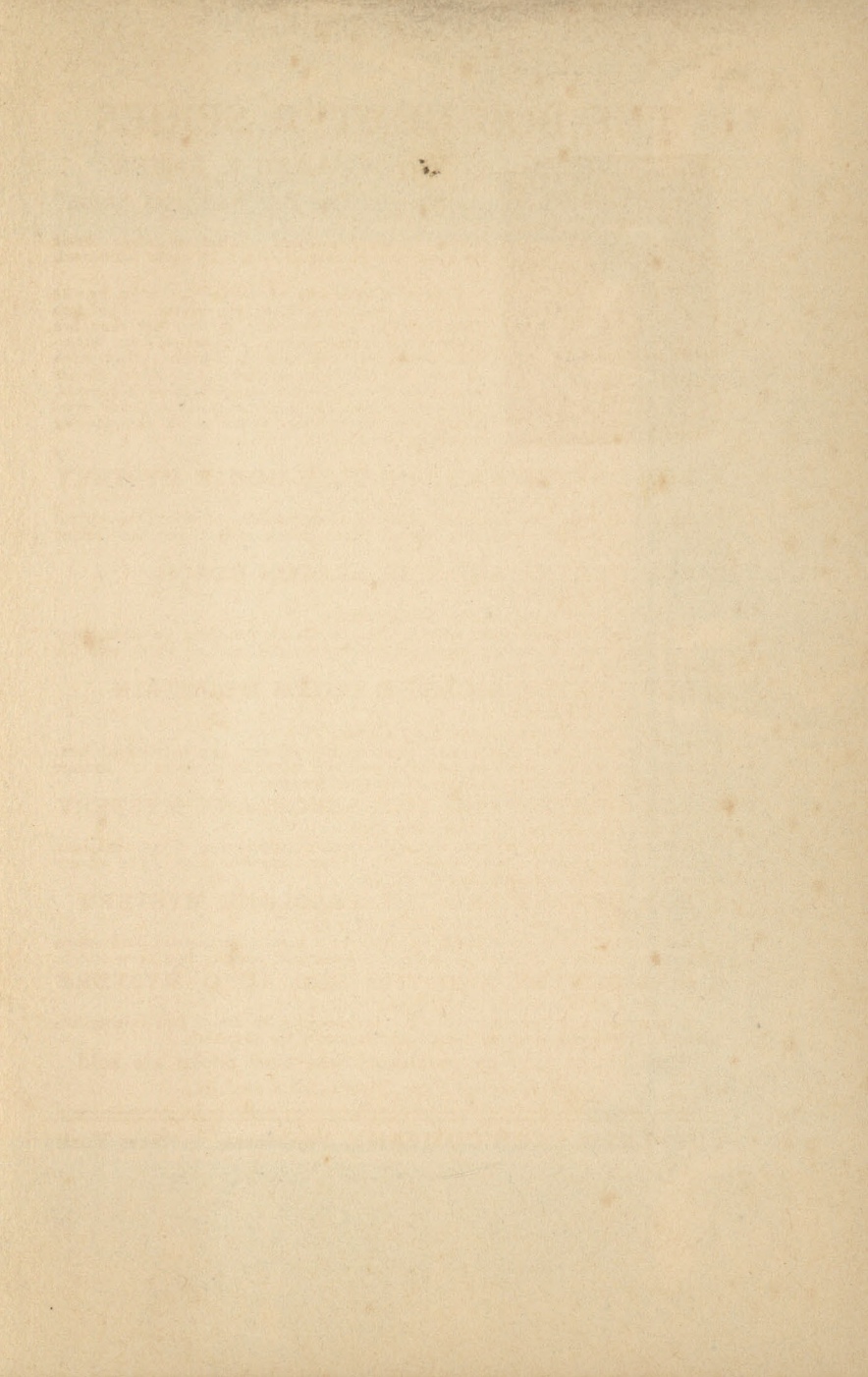
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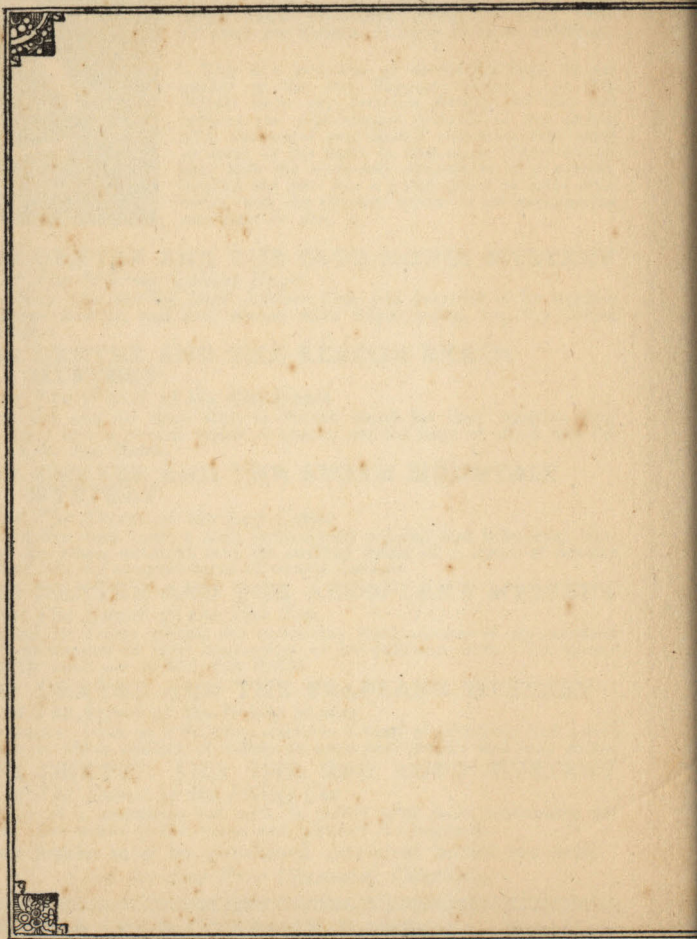
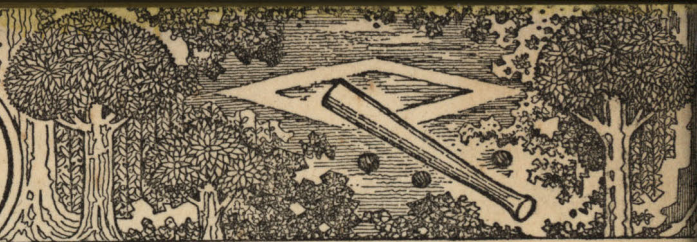
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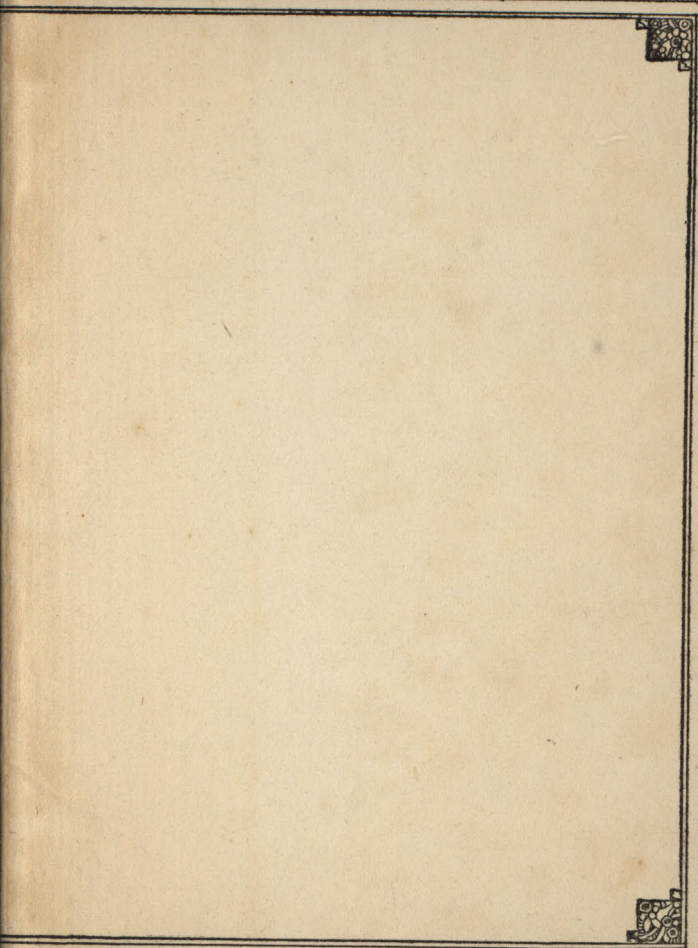
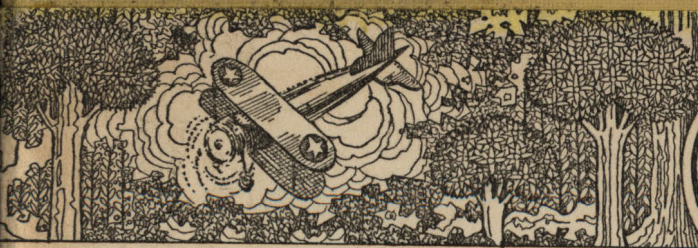
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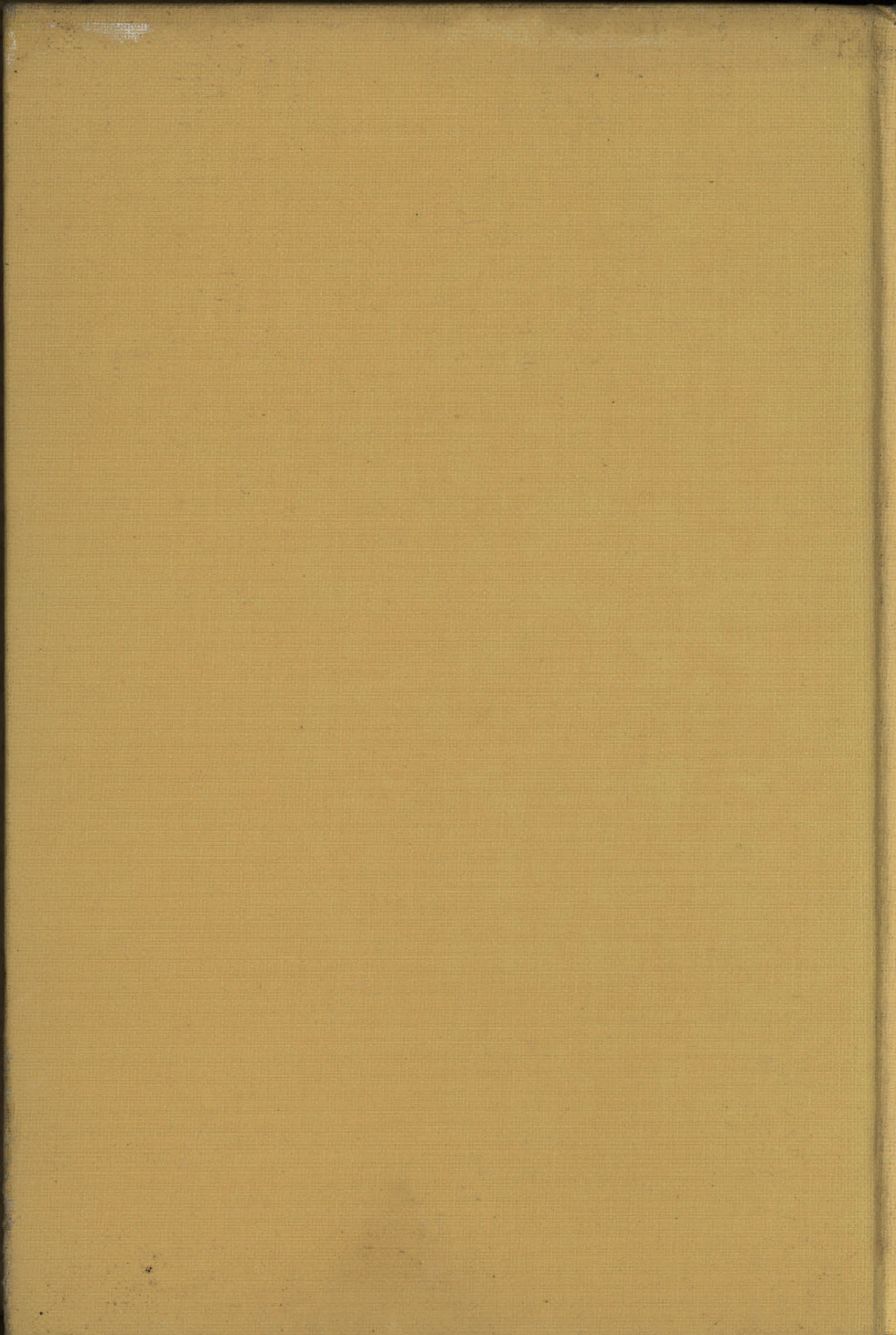
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